RUBBERNECK 18

John Stevens

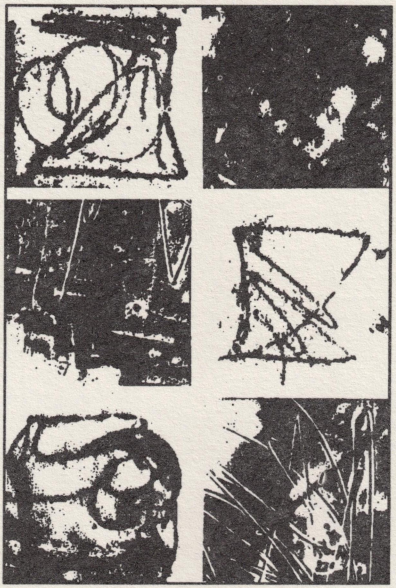
Emily Bezar

Jin Hi Kim & Joseph Celli

Howard Riley

Victor Sjöström

free issue



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Rubberneck 19

Special Issue

Turning The Musical Table: Improvisation In Britain 1965-1990

by Nick Couldry

A major theoretical analysis of British improvised music and its key practitioners. Authoritative and accessible writing by one of Britain's leading keyboard improvisors. Previously unpublished.

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VOX

Welcome to Issue 18. **Rubberneck** is 10 years old this year! *(I knew you'd be surprised...)* Rather than splash out on Jeroboams of Moët and miles of bunting, I've decided to put the magazine's limited resources to more practical use by producing two extra issues this year. **Issue 19** is entirely devoted to Nick Couldry's previously unpublished essay **Turning The Musical Table: Improvisation In Britain 1965-1990** (see relevant details on facing page). I hope you are in a position to give this important piece of theoretical writing your support. Later in the year, following the Autumn/Winter regular issue (#20), **Issue 21** will see the second **Fiction Issue**. Contributions to that issue are still being considered (see Back Issues page). This is also an appropriate time to say a special **THANK YOU** to those people who have made the first 10 years possible: contributors (writers, designers, photographers) past and present; interviewees; the many advertisers who have helped to finance the project; suppliers of review material; distributors/outlets; Steve Croft for his reliable printing service; Eileen, Jim and Catherine Blackford for moral support and carrying boxes; and readers who have given constructive feedback in print and by letter. This issue is dedicated to you.

Chris Blackford/June 1995

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Cover Star **Jin Hi Kim**

If you find mistakes in this magazine, please remember that they are there for a purpose. We try to publish something for everyone, and some people are always looking for mistakes.

Rapture & Rationality

Giuseppe Colli interviews American singer songwriter pianist and electronic soundsmith Emily Bezar

Okay, let's face it: these days Academia is not cool — a long prestigious résumé can actually work against you. So I'm glad that when I first listened to **Grandmother's Tea Leaves** (Emily Bezar's debut CD — see the review in **Rubberneck 17**) I knew nothing about her, and so I did not ponder over her 'street credibility quotient' (I'm as prejudiced as the next guy/girl). What I heard was a complex plot — meticulously realized. Sure, the vocals revealed obvious classical training, but though some of the musical questions were part of a recognisable tradition, the answers were for the most part original (the fact that she produced and partially engineered the tracks certainly didn't hurt, either).

So, yes, she graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory in 1987 with a degree in voice and electronic music, and earned her M.A. at Stanford in 1991. She's won a couple of prizes for her electroacoustic work; she was a member of the "eclectic rock band" The Potato Eaters (hear their 7" single 'Dog Eared (but forgotten)/My World' on Rastascan Records) and is an improvisor in the San Francisco Bay Area. But it's the *music* that matters...

I regard your CD as a fascinating mixture of classical and electronic music plus an echo of 60s singers/songwriters. What were your main influences?

EB I think my singing and my composing influences are pretty different... this may account for a lot in my music. I used to sing along with Ella Fitzgerald, Barbara Streisand and Joni Mitchell records as a girl and figure out the tunes at the

piano. I was playing Brahms rhapsodies, Chopin études, Bartok **Mikrokosmos** on the piano during that same time. I couldn't name a single classical singer until I was, oh, 19 or so... I was taught the technique without the context for a while. Vocal composers who first stunned me were Debussy, the *Ariettes Oublieés*, Wolf, Mignon *Lieder*... his incredible phrase settings. And George Crumb's sense of colour in the voice is amazing. The Scriabin symphonies, Bill Evans' miraculous conversations. Kurt Weill is a more recent influence. I'm fascinated by the performance history of his work... it seems like a tradition is still evolving. My electronic influences are harder to pin down — maybe Pink Floyd meets Stockhausen?

Apparently, all signals pass through the analytical part of the brain before they reach the emotional control centre... it proves to me that we really need to nurture this connection between faith and rationality.

Had I to use just three words to describe your record, I'd say "rapture through rationality" — which seems to run against the grain of the current musical climate...

EB That's great... you couldn't have put it better. I think about this duality all the time. I'm constantly aware of an inner battle between my reason and my intuition. Everybody *is* to a greater or lesser degree, I think. Maybe I just waste more time worrying about it. You say against the current climate, yes, so much is either pure catharsis or pure irony, or pure process. I have a friend who's studying neurobiology. Apparently, all signals pass through the analytical part of the brain before they reach the emotional control centre. It's not the pathway I would have imagined, based on our generally volatile natures, but it proves to me that we really need to nurture this connection between faith and rationality. I always think back to those incredible Renaissance motets. It's such architectural stuff but so transcendent.

How much of the instrumental side was sequenced?

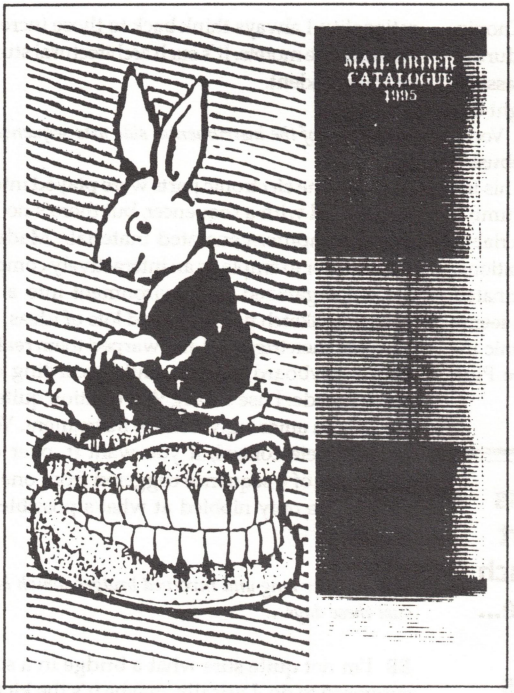
EB All of the electronic parts were played into and then edited with a sequencer, but there's no looping or computer-generated material. 'Madame's Reverie', for example, is an interactively composed piece. I organized my environment into a huge electronic sketch pad: I massed lots of ideas, sonic gestures, then triggered and warped them real-time with a keyboard, all the while recording every move I made. I use a Korg Wavestation quite a bit live. It's an amazingly flexible instrument. You've got complete control, if you want it, over every parameter of a sequence triggered from one note. I think I've only nibbled at what's possible with that thing.

You compose long and involved bridges which is unusual these days...

EB I'm not quite sure what a bridge in a song is supposed to do. Lyrically, maybe it's the kicker — that little piece of wisdom that reveals the whole song — or maybe complete subterfuge, I don't know. I think my bridges are like extended B or C sections. 'Just Like Orestes' is my attempt to write a song in sonata form; the bridge is the development section, I suppose. I crave adventure, little journeys... my musical *wanderlust*. The bridge-as-film-splice idea is another favourite: making a song lurch to a new mood and scenario in a flash. The tricky part is transitioning back to the main themes. Some of my songs are almost through-composed, I think, but I'm usually just reworking the verse material dramatically. There's still a sense that you've heard it before. Several of my newer, shorter songs have their 'bridges' at the very end. Those are my ellipse songs. No closure.

You put a lot of attention into details, from the way you retard a chord to the shifting relations between the vocals in, say, 'Rest Me Here'.

EB Hmm... do I? All that thick vocal counterpoint at the end of 'Rest Me Here' was actually done as a



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multitracked improv. I left the particular dissonances up to my ear and the detail work came in the mix, where I pushed and pulled voices to come up with a fabric that worked. Most of the songs on this album are very ungrounded rhythmically, so I guess issues of tempo transition and rubato become very important. I don't give myself many groove pockets to fall into here, so I'm always working horizontally to establish the 'feel' of the tune.

With so many electronic options at our disposal, it's more of a problem to decide when a piece is finished?

EB Yes, more than ever today. But I think artistic creation has always involved that struggle. How do you really know when you've said what you can on one canvas? I think the answer has to be to always let the expressive goal set the pace and the limits. I'm still much in the process of learning how many ideas I can successfully combine at once. You either get an exhilarating ride or chaotic rubbish and sometimes you just take your chances and throw it all on.

Your lyrics are very varied, but all share a complex, adult dimension that's not common. How do you see lyrics in relation to music?

EB I very rarely have a lyrical idea before a musical one. Does this disqualify me as a songwriter? Sometimes I feel burdened as a singer — being expected to express with words. I relate to abstract sound a lot better than to verbs, I think. My subjects are usually evoked by what I'm hearing or playing. A cool melody might emerge with some scattered vowels, consonants, nonsense and then I'll work it into meaning of some kind.

What are your current favourite listenings?

EB There's an American pianist/composer who lives in Japan, Bruce Stark, who's just put out an incredibly beautiful chamber music record. Great string quartet writing. Elizabeth Schwarzkopf's version of Strauss' **Four Last Songs** is a lifetime favourite. Joni Mitchell's **Hissing Of Summer Lawns**, John Adams' **Harmonium**. Ira Mowitz is writing gorgeous computer music.

And, finally, what about future plans?

EB I have a couple of bigger pieces in mind. Another vocal dramatic scene and maybe a piece for guitar and electronics... I can't play a note on guitar, but I had a recent dream where one was buzzing all night long in my ear... there were marimbas, too. I'm recently fascinated by the surge of Eno-inspired ambient electronic recordings. I'm still trying to find a way to describe what I do, maybe in connection with this genre? People seem stumped so I need to come up with a catchy phrase. Ambient-opera-folk? Sounds like a colony of little green Melisandes in Pennsylvania. Who knows? I hope to be recording my next CD this Fall. Of course, I dream about a staged tour with lights and sound oozing out of the walls, you know... my operatic fantasy. Well, maybe some day. **R**

*Emily Bezar's debut CD **Grandmother's Tea Leaves** is released on OLiO Records, P.O. Box 5899-182, Berkeley, CA 94705, USA.*

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The Life of Riley

photo: Kenneth Ansell

Howard Riley rationalises backwards over 30 years at the forefront of British free jazz

There's much to be said for the "I just blow man/woman" philosophy. At its best it gives intuition, practical discovery and spiritual search top priority. So, when **Rubberneck** approached me at the John Stevens Memorial Concert in January of this year to write about myself, I felt... hesitant. But life is lived forwards and rationalised backwards, so perhaps a musical retrospective might lead to some new insights (hopefully).

In the beginning there was bebop — no freely improvised music, that was way ahead in the evolutionary chain. The positive reaction of a 12 year-old in Huddersfield circa 1955 to Parker, Monk and Bud Powell has to be emotional and mysterious, but that was definitely the sound that communicated to me. Bill Evans and Cecil Taylor came into the frame slightly later, also Duke Ellington — beyond category. As I could already play the piano it became a question of absorbing the feel, trusting myself enough to be spontaneous (to improvise), and also of acquiring the nuts and bolts of harmony, form, etc. In that long-gone era there was no 'jazz education', no 'real books' — nothing except enthusiasm, ears, record turntables and an inquiring spirit. But by 1950 (still at school) I was playing in local jazz clubs three nights a week with musicians twice my age. I've still got a copy of a tape I made in 1960 with my then trio — very mono, all standards.

imitation and identity

So far, assimilation of great American role models was enough. In other words I was an imitator. But then things got more complex during the first half of the 1960s. I studied music formally in Britain and America, played summer seasons in dance bands at Butlins and on the P&O line which spelt out to me that the future was not there. Then I heard the new free jazz and gradually realised that a personal identity was what improvised music was all about.

Arriving in London in 1967 I was primed for the next musical upheaval (although I didn't know that). The feeling I had was that the musical vo-

photo: Nick White

cabulary I had acquired up to that point needed freeing up. This feeling often manifested itself in technical problems — how to use more of the keyboard? How to equalise the right and left hands? Actually, it was all about opening up greater expressive possibilities and finding an individual voice.

At this point, I must pay tribute to the musicians I was fortunate enough to meet and play with. In retrospect, the last half of the 1960s was an extraordinarily fertile period for jazz/creative music in England. Any improvisor has to do his/her homework, of course, but there's no substitute for the give-and-take of playing in bands. I only have space to mention the major colleagues, I'm afraid. I'd met Evan Parker pre-London in 1963 and we'd done some playing together. I've got a tape of that as well, but Evan has sworn me to inaudibility — legs *do* break!

In London I used a Trio as the focus of my activities. Barry Guy was there right from the start on double-bass and is on all the original Trio recordings. John Stevens and (especially) Tony Oxley were, in their very different ways, a revelation as to what drums could be. The conceptual influence of Derek Bailey, Phil Wachsmann, Trevor Watts and Paul Rutherford was also great in this period. I just regret that we didn't play more. I also kept in touch with my original inspirational roots by playing with John McLaughlin (pre-America), Art Themen and Tony Levin.

the third stage

After these two large arcs — 'imitative' and 'non-imitative' — the third stage came in an unexpected way. I started doing solo piano concerts in 1976 and ever since have tried to keep a balance between solo and group activity. Initially, the solo work was merely an extension of the group work in terms of vocabulary, but by the early 1980s I sensed that I could incorporate the earlier stage with the later stage in a personal way, and it would extend my expressive range. In technical terms, I could use melody, harmony, rhythm, form, texture, time, no-time, chord-changes, no chord-changes in the course of a single solo performance, and this finally got me to a sound that I could live with.

Inevitably, this influenced my group activity, but things were more complex with the result that right now I'm playing in bands that utilise all the above elements (the Duo with Jaki Byard, the Quartet with Elton Dean, Paul Rogers and Mark Sanders) as well as bands that concentrate on one area only (the Duo with Keith Tippett, the Quartet with Art Themen). Not forgetting, also, Barry Guy's London Jazz Composers' Orchestra which brings large-scale composition into the picture, and ad hoc improvising groups.

So, any insights? Mainly about breadth and depth, I think. Identity is not threatened by the musical area worked in by an improvisor. Knowledge and insight can be accumulated and don't have to be discarded at each new stage of development — Coltrane, Lacy, Anthony Braxton and Paul Bley are relevant here. So freedom is an attitude which can be utilised in any specific musical area.

Identity is not threatened by the musical area worked in by an improvisor. Knowledge and insight can be accumulated and don't have to be discarded at each new stage of development...

Of course, I've spoken only of musical values. Musical values imply political values and inevitably I have my opinions. For instance, 'jazz education' as it has developed over the past 20 years is diametrically opposed to the above insights, and only seems willing to deal with a very narrow ersatz spectrum of the music — 'playing by numbers'. Surely the full range of information should be available!

But, I digress. Regarding the future. I don't know, and that's where the interest lies. **R**

Howard Riley (born 1943) is recognised as one of the leading pianists in modern jazz and improvised music over the past 30 years. He has gained Masters' degrees from the Universities of Wales, York and Indiana. Since 1967 he has made over 40 recordings: solo, duo, trio, quartet and big band. He's also a composer who has had works performed by the Nash Ensemble and the Welsh String Quartet. As an educationalist he has taken jazz piano and workshop classes at London's Guildhall School Of Music and Goldsmiths College since the late 60s.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Solo Recordings

Solo Imprints (Jaguar,1972-3); **Intertwine** (Mosaic, 1975); **Shaped** (Mosaic, 1976); **The Toronto Concert** (Vinyl, 1977); **The Other Side** (Spotlite, 1978); **Duality** (View, 1981); **For Four On Two Two** (Affinity, 1984); **Fingerprints** (Wondrous, 1983-87); **Procession** (Wondrous, CD 1990); **The Heat Of Moments** (Wondrous, CD 1991-2); **Beyond Category** (Wondrous, CD 1993)

Duo Recordings

First Encounter (w Keith Tippett) (Impetus, 1981; part of 3LP set **Facets**); **In Focus** (w Tippett) (Affinity, 1984); **Live At The Royal Festival Hall** (w Jaki Byard) (Leo, 1984); **The Bern Concert** (w Tippett) (FMR, CD 1993)

Trio Recordings

Discussions, Howard Riley Trio (Opportunity, 1967); **Angle**, Howard Riley Trio (CBS Realm, 1968-9); **Flight**, Howard Riley Trio (Turtle, 1971); **Synopsis**, Howard Riley Trio (Incus, 1973); **Wishing On The Moon** (w Castronari/Marsh) (Future Music Records, CD 1993)

Other Recordings

Le Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe, New Jazz Orchestra (Verve, 1968); **Improvisations Are Forever Now** (w Guy/Wachsmann) (Vinyl, 1977); **Endgame** (w Watts/Guy/Stevens) (Japo, 1979); **Atlantic City**, Michel Legrand (DRG, 1980); **Harmos**, London Jazz Composers' Orchestra (Intakt, CD 1989); **Double Trouble**, London Jazz Composers' Orchestra (Intakt, CD 1989); **The Holywell Concert** (w Coxhill/Rutherford/Haslam) (Slam, CD 1990); **The Vortex Tapes**, Elton Dean (Slam, CD 1990); **All The Tradition**, Elton Dean-Howard Riley Quartet (Slam, CD 1990); George Haslam, **Level Two** (Slam, CD 1992); **Portraits**, London Jazz Composers' Orchestra (Intakt, CD 1993); **Two's And Three's**, Elton Dean (Voiceprint, CD 1993)

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free-forum

Announcing a new column name, if not a new column. **Improview** has now become **Free-Forum** which better reflects the wider scope this section of the magazine has been offering for some time — project news, relevant magazine listings, book listings/reviews, occasional gig reviews, etc. **Improview**'s original intention to encourage improvisors to write about their own work and/or related issues has, of course, been implemented elsewhere in the magazine. If you have items suitable for inclusion in **Free-Forum**, please send them to the usual address.

Magazines...

Audion (#29, October 1994) is a French special featuring interviews with Jac Berrocal, Richard Pinhas and John Livengood; articles on Jean-François Pauvros, Jacques Rémus and Urban Sax; plus CD reviews, gig reviews, etc. £1.90 from *Audion, P.O. Box 225, Leicester LE2 1DX, England.*

EST (Electric Shock Treatment, #6) interviews Elliott Sharp, John Oswald, Nicolas Collins, Barbed, Hildegard Westerkamp, etc. Reviews cover a wide range of experimental musics, and the editorial intention is to go wider still. Is *EST* about to become the avant-garde music press' answer to *The Wire*? Informed and committed writing. One issue published each year. £2.50 from *EST, 182 Cavendish Road, Balham, London SW12 0DA, England.*

Musiche (#16, Autumn 1994) the key Italian new music magazine contains interviews with Peter Blegvad, Tom Johnson, Jean Derome and Boris Kovac; articles on René Lussier, Palinckx, Jon Rose, Company, Sylvia Hallett, Clive Bell, Ensemble Modern, Stockhausen, Radical New Jewish Culture, Klezmer; plus news, reviews, etc. (in Italian) *Musiche, via della Canonica 38, 19121 La Spezia, Italy.*

Musicworks (#61, Spring 1995) the erudite and accessible Journal Of Sound Exploration includes essays on 'Death Of The Masterpiece' by Tim Brady; 'John Cage' by Martin Erdmann; 'On Romanticism' by Stan Brakhage; 'Women's Music In Kenya' by Carol Ann Weaver, etc. Plus a CD (70 minutes) of mostly vocal works by the above writers/composers. *Musicworks, 179 Richmond Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1V3.*

Resonance (Vol. 3, No. 2) includes part 1 of an essay on plunderphonics by Chris Cutler; women improvisors discuss 'women's improv'; Alan Wilkinson considers 12 years of the Termite Festival; Jon Rose; live/CD reviews, etc. £3.00 from *LMC Ltd, 60 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3BP, England.*

Revue & Corrigée (#23, March 1995) contains interviews with Daunik Lazro, Henri Chopin, Tom Cora, Anthony Coleman, Evan Lurie and Samm Bennett. The featured label interview is with Éditions Cactus; articles on God Is My Co-Pilot and US Pop Freaks; plus news and CD reviews. If your French is up to scratch, you shouldn't miss this important magazine. *Revue & Corrigée, 25 rue Docteur Bordier, 38100 Grenoble, France.*

The Wire (#130 - 134) has featured the likes of Jon Hassell, Bill Laswell, Jim O'Rourke, Barry Guy, AMM, Tony Conrad, Caspar Brötzmann, David S Ware, Morton Feldman, a guide to Krautrock by Julian Cope, a partly tongue-in-cheek guide to progressive rock, and a special supplement on 'Sonic Youth And The Noise Of New York'. *The Wire, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF, England.*

Books...

Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping
Jon Rose & Rainer Linz
NMA Publications (distr. RéR)

Effectively the sequel to **The Pink Violin** (see the review in **Rubberneck 10/11**; sorry Rainer Linz for then missing you off the credits!) which received quite a bit of positive critical attention. Again, the central premise is the fictitious persona of Dr Johannes Rosenberg: Australian violin virtuoso and avant-garde theoretician extraordinaire; plus, of course, mention of other members of the redoubtable Rosenberg dynasty. The emphasis in **Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping** is on the commodification of contempo-

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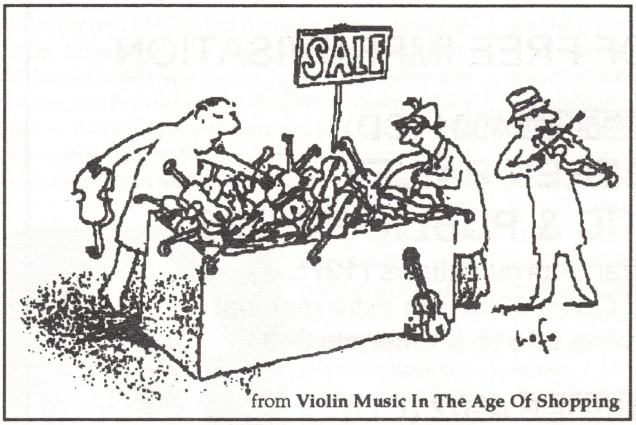

from **Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping**

rary music culture.

The book begins with news of Dr Rosenberg's untimely demise, having "quite rationally carried out the logical necessities of his career as a violinist and committed suicide." Thereafter the satire leaps back and forth between the insanely clever Rosenbergian projects, to more general comments on the state of music in a mediatised culture, singling out certain individuals whom they regard as having 'sold out'. Nigel Kennedy comes in for a paragraph of crude, satirical invective for his "fake cockney accent [and] indistinctive violin playing"; *their* bold type reads: "**Kennedy, why are you such a Jerk?**" Will they be hearing from Nige's solicitor, I wonder. Also, Michael Nyman is accused of making "more money out of his tribute/appropriations of classical music than anyone else." That maybe so, but at least Nyman sometimes informs the listener in a sleevenote of his 'debt' to a particular composer, be it Purcell, Mozart or Schumann. After that it's up to the listener to decide whether the music's worth the candle. Softer targets for abuse are the tribute bands like Bjorn Again "working worldwide performing all kinds of pathetic rubbish from **Abba** to **The Doors** to **Thin Lizzy** to **Led Zeppelin**" [their bold type].

Interestingly, however, Messrs Rose and Linz don't take too kindly to when the 'boot' is on somebody else's foot. In *The Wire* #106/7 (p66) their **Pink Violin** was reviewed by Brian Morton who, all things considered, tried to be relatively positive about a book he basically didn't find very funny: "tends to degenerate into schoolboy surrealism" was as tart as he got. For his 'sins' Rose and Linz retaliate by ripping the piss out of him in a chapter titled 'The Gates Of Mall' — it's silly, bitchy stuff really, that shouldn't have seen daylight.

The most enjoyable parts of **Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping** are still the numerous illustrations, photographs, newspaper cuttings and advertisements where Rose and Linz's surreal humour is at its most wildly inventive. A third book on the Rosenbergs is in the pipeline — don't do it chaps, quit *this* particular myth while it's still warm!

Evan Parker Discography
Francesco Martinelli
Bandecchi & Vivaldi Editore

Unfortunately, there's still a snooty, sometimes even contemptuous, attitude towards people who compile lists of musicians and their recordings: the pejorative adjective some of us use to describe their labours is 'trainspotterish'. Italian music journalist, concert promoter and member of the Center For Research About Improvised Music (CRIM), Francesco Martinelli, is no trainspotter, nor is his book a trainspotter's guide to Evan Parker.

If you've ever had to write an article on a marginalised musician, you'll appreciate the wealth of information gathered in this discography and the avenues of research this information makes possible. Likewise, it provides the keen listener with a valuable clew to find their way through the maze of this saxophonist's numerous recordings: in fact, every recording session and its personnel from the first on 18/2/68 (resulting in **Karyobin**) through to 5/8/94 (forthcoming album with Sue Ferrar on Mash Productions) has been catalogued — a total of 154, and still rising! Parker's multitude of US and European collaborators can be accessed individually using the handy

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Musicians Index; or, if you prefer to start your enquiry from an album title, you can do so by using the Record Index. Francesco Martinelli has also added his own lucid 'Afterthoughts' on the range of Parker's work and his attitudes to recording and record production.

One of the pleasures of browsing through the discography was rediscovering albums I'd long forgotten, such as Evan's 1981 appearance on an album by Michael Nyman and discovering that he'd even played on a Scott Walker album. That Evan Parker is one of the earliest and most important exponents of improvised music makes this discography especially valuable. Martinelli's next work is an Anthony Braxton discography. Long may his scholarship remain fervent. *(Contact: Francesco Martinelli, Lungarno Mediceo 10, 56127 Pisa, Italy)*

Projects...

European Free Improvisation Pages (EFIP) the first resource on the Internet devoted exclusively to European free improvisation is now up and running. EFIP is available from a server at The University Of Sheffield and can be freely accessed by anyone with a World Wide Web browser such as Netscape or Mosaic. Information is available on individual musicians and groups, addresses of independent record labels, lists of the recordings produced by these labels, distributors and retailers of the music across the world, a bibliography of books, magazines, and lists of upcoming concerts. One aspect that makes this service different from paper publications is the hypertext links which enable a user to jump from one musician to another, to a related group, to an independent record label with which the musician is associated, or to the full details of a particular recording. In addition, photographs of musicians are available on screen and many record and CD label covers have been scanned in, in full colour. The direct address of the service — its URL or Universal Resource Locator — is:
http://www.shef.ac.uk/misc/rec/ps/efi/ehome.html
If you would like to contribute information to EFIP, or would like further information, contact *Peter Stubley, St George's Library, The University Of Sheffield, Mappin Street, Sheffield, S1 4DT, England; Tel: 0114 282 5043; Fax: 0114 279 6406.*

The 2:13 Club is held on the first Saturday of every month in *The Gallery, Stoke Newington Library, Church Street, London N16*, at 2:13p.m. Offering a provocative mix of diverse, challenging musics, drawing on free improvisation, world music and performance. Events are independently promoted by the improvising group All Gone — John Bisset (guitar) and Lester Moses (soprano sax and flutes).

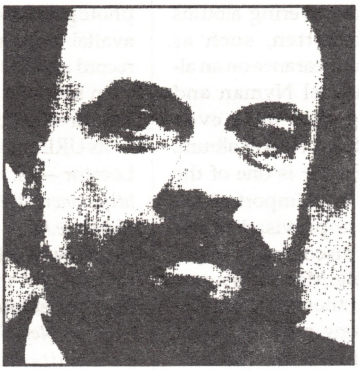
The 2:13 Club opened in October 1994, developing from performances with The Gathering at the LMC Festival, on The Strollerthon '93 and The Musical Relay, "a batonless impro circuit", at the Stoke Newington Midsummer Festival 1993 and 1994. Concerts have produced thrilling, fiery music, providing a platform for the improv of All Gone and collaborations with the likes of percussionists Charles Hayward & Simon Waterford; master Iranian tonbak player Mostafa Shams; saxophonists Alan Wilkinson and Caroline Kraabel; the Great Explorers cello and double bass duo; writer/performer Aaron Williamson; and Viv Dogan-Corringham and Michael Ormiston who extend Turkish and Mongolian musical forms.

The Club is held in a resonant Gallery space amidst ever-changing art exhibitions. Audiences have varied from 30 to 50 — encouraging numbers for music outside of the mainstream. *(Programme details from: John Bisset, 1 Macaulay House, Woodlea Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 OTR. Tel: 0171 254 2405;* or *Lester Moses, 2c Cromartie Road, London N19 3SJ. Tel: 0171 281 5897)*

A new bibliographical service for researchers, journalists and the general public called **The Jazz Index** is now available from the **Jazz-Institut Darmstadt** which is offering a computer index of articles and interviews published in the numerous periodicals available in the Institut's archive. Printouts can be ordered. *(Jazz Index, Jazz-Institut Darmstadt, Kasinostrasse 3, D-64293 Darmstadt, Germany. Tel: (06151) 13-2877; Fax: (06151) 13-2918)* **R**

Free-Forum compiled and reviewed by **Chris Blackford**

No World Conversation No World Improvisation



Korean komungo player Jin Hi Kim discusses improv tactics with duo partner, American double reed player Joseph Celli.

Joseph Celli It's interesting that we've had to try twice to make this conversation about improvisation, and yet when we make an improvisation we only try once.

Jin Hi Kim Why's that?

JC Maybe it's because we really don't talk so much about what we do. Maybe years ago we did more talking and now not so much. When it came to talking about improvisation it was difficult because it was not as exciting as the actual playing with you is. Maybe there was a lot of rambling, whereas I think when we play we don't ramble much. If we ramble when we play we tend to cut it short.

JHK I think you have a memory about what you've done in an improvisation though, and you can always analyse it.

JC But we don't really.

JHK I think I do.

JC So we perform collectively, but we analyse individually... I remember when we first started to improvise together in 1987, and I realise since that time a lot of my improvisations have changed. I think my work was more conceptual prior to that time, that oftentimes I had an idea or a concept that I would build an improvisation on. Not necessarily a musical or harmonic one, but maybe, for example, one based on the sustaining of a sound for an indefinite period of time, or possibly playing at the intensest level for short bursts with silences. So often in my work with Malcolm Goldstein there was a conceptual basis, and now I think the work is more melodic and has more musical concerns.

JHK To me, my improvisation is the feeling of the energy in the music because I come from a traditional Korean musical background. I have two

Jin Hi Kim is a composer/improvisor who trained as a traditional musician in her native Korea. Since coming to the USA in 1980 she has broadened her musical studies at Mills College Of Music where she studied with Terry Riley, Lou Harrison and David Rosenboom among others. She is a pioneer in the fusion of traditional and contemporary music in both her komungo improvisations and her compositional activity. As a performer on the komungo (a six-string Korean zither plucked with a bamboo stick, which originated in the Fourth Century), the electric komungo (which she co-built with Danny Ferrington in 1990) and the changgo (a two-headed Korean drum), she has given solo improvisation concerts around the world, and has also performed in duos and trios with some of the important names in contemporary improvisation, such as Derek Bailey, Elliott Sharp, James Newton, Abdul Wadud, Henry Kaiser, Malcolm Goldstein, Joseph Celli, and the California EAR Unit. In 1992 she performed at Company Week in London.

ways of thinking about the music. One is sort of abstract but at the same time very meditative because of the court music tradition, and the other way is shamanistic, to do with ecstatic and very fast and exhilarating tempi. This approach is based more on improvisation.

JC It's been interesting to see in our playing together that there are certain instruments that seem to have a natural resonance with each other. Those instruments by definition have certain sound characteristics that are interesting to pursue. For instance, the oboe doesn't seem to work well with the komungo. In fact I hardly ever play oboe with you, but I do play the Indian Mukha Veena which has glissandi and microtonal characteristics a little bit closer maybe to what you're doing with the komungo, so it offers more flexibility in that respect. And also the komungo is a relatively slow instrument and even when we're playing at particularly intense levels of speed, it seems to me that the komungo is still using a tremendous amount of inflexion at what you'd consider a fast speed for the komungo. Whereas with an industrial instrument like the oboe which has lots of keys and lots of speed to it, when you're getting to really fast speeds the microtonal inflexion and the nuances tend not to be as easily perceived.

JHK And I also use the electric komungo with your Yamaha WX-7.

JC Yes, it's interesting how they also seem very natural together. They both have a very wide expressive range, but you've been able to maintain a characteristic of the komungo on the electric komungo, and with the WX-7 I've always tried to achieve a sound characteristic that remains, even though it's electronic, a wind instrument that is controlled by tongue, lips and breath.

JHK Of course, we have played together with other musicians as well, like the African percussionist Mor Thiam and the Australian didgeridoo player Adam Plack and a shakuhachi player in Japan. In a trio situation our music has changed.

JC Yes, when we play together as a duo, because we've done it so much, I think we've developed a

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Joseph Celli is a composer/improvisor and double reed performer. Over the past 20 years or so he has premiered more than 35 works written for him by various composers. He has also performed his own music and produced many contemporary arts activities for others. After his studies he began to commission and collaborate with composers to create an extensive new body of work for the oboe and English horn. These works range from solo acoustic works, to works with ensembles, live electronics, mixed and multimedia, and improvisation. He is internationally recognised for developing totally new sonic possibilities for double reed instruments. Among the composers who have written pieces for him are Alvin Lucier, Pauline Oliveros, Jerry Hunt, Malcolm Goldstein, Phill Niblock, James Fulferston, Ornette Coleman, Jim Pomeroy, David Cope and Eleanor Hovda. He has also given the American premieres of **Solo** and **Spiral** by Karlheinz Stockhausen in 1971 and 1973. He is the founder/director of the independent recording label O.O. Discs, Inc.

very identifiable sound. Great jazz groups like John Coltrane's group could always be identified by their sound. Philip Glass' ensemble could also be identified by their sound. But it surprises me that we can oftentimes add other people and still maintain our group sound and be expansive enough for other musicians to slide in and out of what we are doing. Ours is not a closed sound, it's open enough for others to come in and out and move in different directions, and not just have to adjust to what we are doing.

It was interesting when we played with a Korean folk drum ensemble because they were the least flexible of any group that we've worked with. All of the adjustments had to happen on our part.

JHK Yes, they don't actually improvise, they only play traditional patterns. To me this was an unsuccessful experience because when I improvise with a musician I expect to create something new together, but I had to match their rhythmic patterns all the time. When I play with other musicians I use a different kind of vocabulary for each situation. I have to operate in a different way on my komungo each time. It's very exciting because my komungo is not just going in one direction. I try to communicate with each musician so I end up creating new sounds. I haven't really developed an identifiable sound with any other musician, each time is so different. That's a very interesting experience for me.

JC One of the things I'm curious about with the komungo is how you work with the small range of notes that the instrument has, and the fact that there's no really large interval changes, and the patterns that you develop are always within two or three or four pitches at any one time.

JHK The Korean traditional musician may be using five notes or the maximum seven notes at the same time, but each note has its own life, its own shape, its own energy, its own vibrato, so you actually end up playing more than five notes. We play between the notes. So this makes the music rich. It's a totally different way of making music than the Western approach.

JC So how does it affect you when you're playing

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with a Western instrumentalist like myself who actually has those inflexions and tries to use those inflexions as part of his vocabulary, but also has this other range of possibilities?

JHK What kind of a range of possibilities?

JC Well, for instance, a wide range of pitch possibilities, a wide range of speed possibilities.

JHK I don't think of music as only pitch range and speed range. I concentrate more on the energy first of all. Even though you have 20 pitches, sometimes it doesn't have the body. Even when I'm using one note I like to create a body with energy, that's my goal. I never try to match your pitch or range. Perhaps if you go low, I might go low, but it's not really that important to me.

JC From these improvisations we've also been able to move to doing more fixed compositions like **36 Strings** (1992) that I made for you for five channels of video and with yourself as komungo soloist, and the piece that you wrote for the Piri Quartet called **Piri Quartet** (1993) that uses three Korean piri players, Korean double-reed players, with myself playing oboe and English horn. It's interesting that for both of us improvisation is one part of our life and a very important part of our life, but we've also been able to move into other kinds of pieces with it.

The playing with you, of course, has opened up a whole world from the first time that you introduced me to Korean music with a cassette in Texas. Then we made a tour of Korea and now that's actually become very much a part of my life on a regular basis, from eating Korean food to studying Korean music, to going there at least once, sometimes twice a year. So, for me the collaboration has not been just an improvisation on music, but it has in many ways been an improvisation on life. As certain things opened up we just followed them, they were not part of a master plan. It's been a very rich experience for me on a lot of different levels. **R**

SELECTED RECORDINGS

Jin Hi Kim & Joseph Celli, **No World Improvisations** (O.O. Discs #2, 1990 CD)

Jin Hi Kim & Joseph Celli (w Shelley Hirsch, Malcolm Goldstein, Alvin Curran, Adam Plack, Mor Thiam), **No World (Trio) Improvisations** (O.O. Discs #4, 1992 CD)

Jin Hi Kim (w Adam Plack, Mor Thiam, Rahul Sariputura, Hideaki Kuribayashi) **Komungo 'Round The World** (Korean Music Source KMS 001, 1994 MC)

Jin Hi Kim (w Derek Bailey, Eugene Chadbourne, Elliott Sharp, Henry Kaiser, David First), **Komunguitar** (Nonsequitur/What Next? WN0012, 1994 CD)

Joseph Celli, **Organic Oboe** (O.O. Discs #1, 1991 CD)

Joseph Celli, **Celli Plays Niblock/Niblock For Celli** (India Navigation Records #3027)

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(photos for this piece by O.O. Discs)

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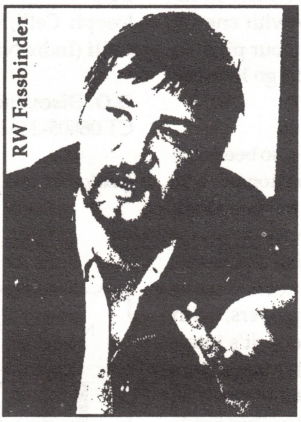
Fassbinder's finest; 1930s _William Wyler_ whips up smalltown frenzy; plus a new section devoted to silent cinema begins with _Victor Sjöström_, father of Swedish cinema...

Effi Briest (1974)
Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder
with Hanna Schygulla, Wolfgang Schenck, Ulli Lommel
Connoisseur Video CR 156
135 mins, Black & White

It's easy to get wrapped up in all the myths about Fassbinder's extraordinary life and death, and overlook a few facts. He was, of course, the most astonishingly prolific film-maker of modern times, but let's not forget that he also had a tremendous strike rate, a healthy proportion of his work finding critical and public acclaim. This film, in most people's estimation, ranks among the very finest of his works.

Although shot at a time when Fassbinder was, in the main, using modern stories to dissect post-war Germany, **Effi Briest** is based on Theodor Fontane's 1890s literary classic. A lonely, repressed, naive young wife is trapped in marriage to an older man and becomes attracted to his friend — to what extent we are never quite clear. The events that follow are a ruthless analysis of the society in which the film is set, as ruthless as, say, **Fear Eats The Soul** or **Fox** among Fassbinder's present-day films. In fact, the correct title of



the film is **Fontane Effi Briest**, and it is very explicitly a *reading* of the novel, not an adaptation. This doesn't make it over-arty or theoretical, however, just very carefully distanced, allowing for the viewer to stay slightly detached while working on its meaning. It's always sumptuous to look at: the art direction and the black-and-white photography are first-rate. There are some striking performances, too: long before she became an art cinema icon (partly through later Fassbinder like **Maria Braun**), Schygulla was perhaps at her best in this astonishing film.

Gerard F Tierney

These Three (1936)
Dir. William Wyler
with Miriam Hopkins, Joel McCrea, Merle Oberon
Video Gems SG 3015
92 mins, Black & White

Based on Lillian Hellman's classic lesbian stage play **The Children's Hour** (a big success at the National Theatre last year), the video release of William Wyler's **These Three** promises, but does not provide, an early representation of lesbian love. Whilst it succeeds in capturing the claustrophobia of smalltown American life and the hysteria unleashed by rumour and scandal, the heterosexualisation of the plot reveals rather more about inter-war anti-lesbianism than the original content of Hellman's play. By making the male character, a local doctor (Joel McCrea), the prinicpal object of desire, Wyler removes all traces of lesbianism from the film.

Yet, in his second screen adaptation of Hellman's play, **The Loudest Whisper** (1963), starring Audrey Hepburn and Shirley MacLaine, Wyler reinstated the play's central themes — female friendship and lesbianism — and in so doing produced one of the few films of the post-war period which dealt with the issue of lesbianism.

These Three may stand alone as a powerful account of the effects of frenzy whipped up by rumour and gossip in a conservative community, but it also needs to be seen as another striking example of Hollywood homophobia.

Catherine Blackford

Reviewed by
Chris Blackford

Silent Screen is a new 'sub-section' within **Videophile** entirely devoted to videos and literature concerning the much neglected field of silent cinema (newcomers, please note that several silent films have been reviewed in earlier issues of the magazine). While it's certainly encouraging to see more high street video stores offering a selection of silent classics, it still remains for them to allocate special shelf space where these films can be easily identified. Hopefully, this might also help to rehabilitate the public's perception of silent films as a still relevant era of cinema history.

Burning Passions: An Introduction To The Study Of Silent Cinema
Paolo Cherchi Usai
BFI Publishing (PBK £10.95)

Paolo Cherchi Usai's highly readable book aims to challenge the prejudices that still surround silent cinema, not least "its current status as a dead language", by equipping the prospective research student, in particular, with a series of helpful 'rules' and guidelines on archive viewing practice, and how to analyse as well as produce adequate written documentation for future study.

Useful preparatory explanations are given on the nature of early film stock, film formats, musical accompaniment, film distribution and film production (it's estimated that 80% of the world production of silent films, between 1895 and 1927 approximately, has been lost; the total number of films made is thought to be in excess of 150,000). The section on colour is supported by some fascinating plates, demonstrating the lustrous lengths to which many film-makers would go to hand-colour, tint or tone their creations. Projection speed continues to be a controversial aspect of silent cinema study, and both Usai and leading silent film historian Kevin Brownlow (who contributes the Preface) draw attention to how projectionists over the decades (and some current video companies) have destroyed the artistic integrity of silent films by projecting them at inappropriate speeds, thus reducing them to near slow-motion tedium or accelerated farce.

The problem raised in Usai's "Rule 8" underpins most theoretical debate around silent cinema: "The 'original' version of a film is a multiple object fragmented into a number of different entities equal to the number of surviving copies." Clearly, this makes silent film study an especially hazardous undertaking, not just for the researcher but for the reviewer too, whose judgement is based on usually having seen only one 'version' among possibly many. Finally, Usai deals with the equally thorny ethical/theoretical concerns of film restoration: eg, whether to present an 'authentic' yet incomplete print to the public, or to create an *artificial* flow that makes a film more aesthetically interesting and entertaining to the spectator. Usai provides the research student and the general *cineaste* with a thorough grounding in the highways and byways of silent cinema scholarship.

Victor Sjöström: His Life And His Work
Bengt Forslund
New York Zoetrope (HBK £21.99)

Considering his undisputed status as the father of Swedish film, it's remarkable that Bengt Forslund's book is one of the very few devoted to the life and work of director/actor Victor Sjöström (1879-1960). Forslund presents a chronological study of the man and his movies, interlacing impartial analyses with well chosen extracts from Sjöström's copious diaries and letters, suggesting that despite international fame and a workaholic's appetite for theatrical and cinematic projects, Sjöström remained largely reticent about his own work and intensely devoted to his family and last wife Edith, to whom he wrote daily while he was away in Hollywood.

Sjöström's close affinity with his mother, who died during childbirth when Victor was only seven, is seen as the underlying

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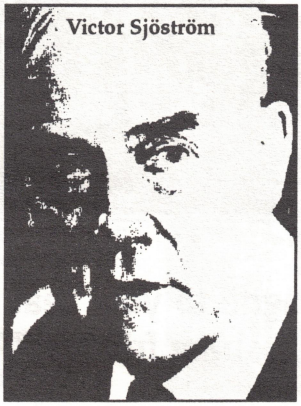
reason for his sensitive portrayal of strong-willed, independent women in his films. As a teenager he fell in love with the theatre, becoming an actor after failing miserably as a doughnut salesman. Later he became a theatre director and was hired along with fellow director Mauritz Stiller by the Swedish film company Svenska Bio.

Between 1912 and 1915 he directed 31 films of which only three still survive. Apart from **Ingeborg Holm** (1913), regarded as the first classic of Swedish cinema, Forslund considers the others to be in line with the studio's demand for "cheap, novelettish entertainment...embarrassing magazine-type stories, absurdly melodramatic romances, or simple, shaggy comedies..." Nevertheless, Sjöström still managed to develop a personal style (rich in psychological subtlety and symbolic natural landscape) with thematic concerns (guilt, redemption, role of women, etc), culminating in internationally acclaimed films such as **The Outlaw And His Wife** (1917), **The Monastery Of Sendomir** (1919) and especially **The Phantom Carriage** (or **Thy Soul Shall Bear Witness**) (1920), hailed as one of the masterpieces of Swedish silent cinema and striking enough to impress Goldwyn (later Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) in Hollywood.

In America, Sjöström (known as 'Seastrom') was adept at balancing artistic and commercial concerns, thus earning the respect of Louis B Mayer and Irving Thalberg, plus a sizeable income. Forslund devotes lengthy attention to the peaks of this period, **The Scarlet Letter** (1926) and the last masterpiece **The Wind** (1927), both starring Lillian Gish. The final chapter considers his careful tutelage of Ingmar Bergman and the latter's **Wild Strawberries** (1957) where a 78 year-old Sjöström turned in a lifetime's best performance in the leading role. This is a benchmark study of one of silent cinema's greatest directors.

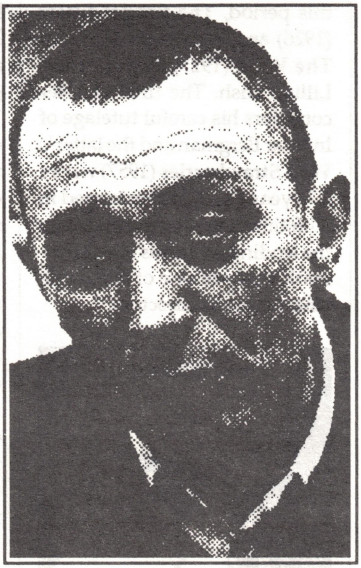


The Monastery Of Sendomir (1919) Dir. Victor Sjöström
with Tora Tege, Tore Svenborg
Redemption Films RETN 045
54 mins, Black & White

The Phantom Carriage (1920)
Dir. Victor Sjöström
with Victor Sjöström, Hilda Borgstrom, Astrid Holm
Redemption Films RETN 041
90 mins, Black & White/Tinted

Both of these films enjoyed considerable commercial success in England when they were first screened in the early 1920s. Of the two, **The Phantom Carriage** is by far the most ambitious, technically and structurally; however, notwithstanding Bengt Forslund's savage dismissal of the narrative as "a religious masterpiece of drivel", **The Monastery Of Sendomir** does have a number of commendable features — notably cameraman Henrik Jaenzon's sophisticated, atmospheric low-key lighting which, combined with suitably ornate costumes and a fine studio castle, lend an air of dignity and polish to this aristocratic tale of marital infidelity, vengeance and atonement. The acting is never overplayed, and with an appropriate score (not Redemption's choice of occasionally relevant romantic piano music) the subtle nuances of mood and gesture would have achieved a greater emotional impact.

Similar themes were enacted within a complex flashback narrative in **The Phantom Carriage**, for which Redemption should be applauded for releasing this gorgeous tinted version; sepia (interior scenes), blue (night scenes) and a couple of red tints enhance the film's pictorial beauty. While modern viewers may find the moral/religious tone (the consequences of drunkenness on family life) a bit sanctimonious, the emotional subtlety of the acting never falters — led by Sjöström as the detestable drunk who finally repents in a twilight spirit zone between life and death. Director Sjöström, photographer Julius Jaenzon (Henrik's brother) and lab man Eugén Hellman, worked long and hard on the stunning, supernatural double exposure sequences that contribute to the film's lasting visual poetry. **R**



Roger Smith remembers

John Stevens

1940-1994

"Champagne to your real friends. Real pain to your sham friends." —*Francis Bacon*

The music says everything about John Stevens; if any confirmation of him being a beautiful geezer is required perhaps listening to it may be worthwhile. Evidence of the Spontaneous Music Ensemble (SME) on song is by no means readily available. Discographies have been compiled by Ian Vickers and Paul Pirongs, genuine long-term fans of John's music, and the estimable Paul Wilson of the National Sound Archive (Exhibition Road, London) — published in the Community Music tribute which itself has become hard to obtain; Derek Bailey, who wrote in it, warmly and humorously of an SME occasion, has not managed to see it since its publication in November 1994. Lots of recordings with Frode Gjersted, a big variety of odds and ends often of a very high quality, but with regard to SME, apart from a few strange little glimpses of funded concerts and contrived and strained studio sessions, nothing. So what's happened since the seminal **Karyobin** era and Emanems of the early 70s?

All mention of SME personnel and why they came and went during this period is strictly avoided. This is a long and complicated subject way beyond any possibility of analysis in a 1500 word article. Also, apologies to parenthesis detesters and for sparse information of specific venues.

Steve Beresford commented one evening in the Little Theatre Club (John's hotbed — my goodness he's had plenty of those during the time in question) that SME was 'folk music'. Now he certainly didn't mean the stuff John was performing professionally with the likes of John Martyn, Danny Thompson and Donovan. He never dissed 'folk' as it was more generally regarded and in fact a friend, Nick Connors, and his Irish band played at the LMC Memorial Concert. Ancestral echoes and his undoubted love of music played simply for the 'crack' may account for this but it must also be

noted that he was a very broad-minded gentleman (If anyone requires information of great depth and accuracy they could do no better than consult Mr Beresford who consistently maintains sheer fascination for the John phenomenon *and* dare I say, simple love for him).

Set up. Allow time for a settled audience. Start at approximately 9.00. Finish 10.30-11.00, drink, relax a little, pack up, haggle over 35p, travel, cool down, get up, off we go again.

Elements of all other musics and arts were always RESPECTED massively. Names that figured constantly for 25 years included Charlie Parker, Philly Jo Jones, Monk/Evans/Nichols, Webern, Bacon and Beckett (John loved to recount SME's twentieth birthday rave-up. Joyfully playing late into the night he could see some feet in front of the drums. There was still an audiant so... onward! Finally, after apocalyptic finale, the end. The cleaning person stood up and meaningfully started to sweep up the rubbish). There were also ample sprinklings of the Clintons, pop, loads of AABAs and world musics. A recent *Music In Our Time* piece was entitled 'Gist' after a drummer John met in Gambia named Stig (Sadly, the new profit-orientated BBC is apparently obstructing availability of these and other tapes). John once steadfastly defended everything of Jelly Roll Morton for two hours in solid debate with Jo Jones; Earl Hines chipping in occasionally.

If by 'folk' it was meant an expression of the times, social context, psychological outpouring, *blah blah* — SME was increasingly it. Tape recorders were appearing circa Little Theatre Club (Herman Hauge, can't trace you, do you have anything left?). During the LMC Gloucester Avenue days they became more sophisticated, operated, for example, by the supportive Martin Davidson ex-Emanem Records and Mark Rowlatt (likewise guv). Into the 80s and 90s and digital machines sprung up with Martin, Michael Gerzon, Ian Vickers, Richie Stevens, Japanese video people and occasional radio broadcasts. SME had not ossified in some plinky-plonk time warp. Tapes were channelled to John. He loved listening close to the gig, sometimes straight after. Imagine ex-Charlie Watts massive stereo system, everyone fuelled to the gills; John suddenly, frighteningly transfixed in a semi-catatonic condition. Then he would bung the cassettes in a chest and forget about them.

Little effort was ever made to get released by record companies. All the improvised music label people were chiselling away at their own agendas and weren't that interested. Parlous financial states and chaos in other areas of life were figuring with alarming frequency. Bringing out and distributing records or CDs is no simple task in these circumstances. Enter Paul Wilson. He took masses of material from a number of sources, including John, and has digitally copied old cassettes and DATS. Slowly but surely other tapes will be catalogued as long as he is around. So, on Exhibition Road, there's an opportunity to listen to the real SME. This came as immense relief to John. He was deeply concerned about there being recordings available, and a sense of posterity was entwined in a complicated way with his view of how history is massively distorted, and his love of family and sense of future generation, increasing concentration and energy directed towards his grandson, the gorgeous Max.

conviction

If there is anyone listening to this music in the future at the National Sound Archive, on CD or cable it's worth trying to get a picture of a typical 'gig'. The set-up was always unsatisfactory with ridiculous licensing laws and pathetic public transport. John invariably had to work hard during the day if he wasn't on the road; straight music and concerts abroad being less and less frequent. In recent years he was finding the gall-swallowing at Community Music, where he worked, increasingly debilitating although he never ceased to feel sheer joy with the younger participants. Pick up the drums, push them onto the tube (he never drove... thank goodness), push them, often a considerable

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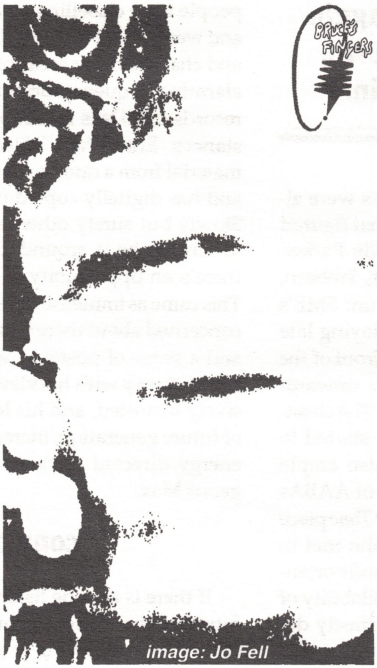

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distance to the venue. Set up. Allow time for a settled audience. Start at approximately 9.00. Finish 10.30-11.00, drink, relax a little, pack up, haggle over 35p, travel, cool down, get up, off we go again. A weaker man could have had a heart attack 30 years earlier. Just listen to the strength in his playing for a moment and you'll begin to understand.

Never ideal places to play, the often sad detachment of improvised music gigs was compounded by its almost exclusive maleness. This has always been a major problem in other music. Jazz, of course, being a prime culprit. John, and most of his associates over these years, revelled in the company of women, to some extent sexually but more broadly in a Platonic sense. An occasional singer and dancer would appear but bandwise and audiencewise 'Britimp' has been a very male preserve. Some jamborees in which SME participated were almost masonic in their white male middle-aged collective smugness about doing something vaguely eccentric. Not so much abroad though, and John would delight in Norway and some of the very few venues in other countries that would accommodate him. Maybe things have improved here slightly in recent years.

"What I have to keep in touch with at the workshop is a feeling of freedom about playing music, and coupled with that, the feeling of wanting other people to have that same freedom."

John Stevens

Improvisation: Its Nature And Practice In Music — Derek Bailey

John was never one to encourage asking "Why?" Nevertheless, it *is* worth asking why his music remained so strong in this environment for so long. Sorry sir. Simply put, John knew that for him an inverse ratio operated. The more hustling the less the quality of music. Period. The Yeats aphorism, "The best lack all conviction whilst the worst are full of passionate intensity" does not apply, however. John was a hater of silly literary witticisms and in his actions belied this particular one. He had *huge* conviction.

Melody Maker, December 15, 1973. Stevens: "Phil Seamen would wink at me and laugh and say 'I know where you're at Stevens. I know what all that shit is about.' But that was just a joke between him and me."

No waiting at airports for the next foreign 'improvisor' to arrive, no systematic sucking-up to players and others with 'influence' and money. Yet, he did appreciate the strategies of marketing and, to a limited extent, did achieve success in other areas of music that are dominated by these. He knew all about the cancerous growth of 'management', hierarchies and insidious authority that facilitates mass brown-tonguing, sheer compromise and fatuous networking.

Authority in its many manifestations frightened him to the extent that he rarely *overtly* kicked against it. No jankers for John in the airforce. His love of group improvisation was one way of reacting to this, his own authoritarianism continually subverted in this perfect context of course. Joe Harriott walking off stage mid-tune for a drink was unforgivable. Even bar staff — Tracey of the Drill Hall seething one day: "This man last night wouldn't go; made me miss the last train." Guess who. It has to be admitted that sometimes he could get things wrong and in the world of improvisation there were plenty of people who could provide ample chastisement.

He knew how his 'successful' contemporaries had moved from the horrors of post-war Archer Street, fighting for a very small slice of cake, through the mumsy (a favourite word) 60s to the prevailing brutal clamour for crumbs. His ego

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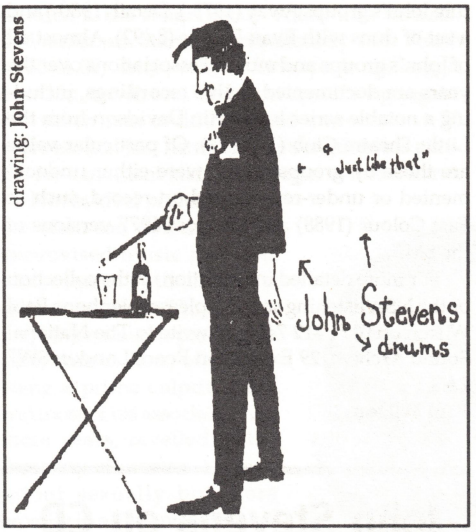


drawing: John Stevens

could somehow picture himself as one of these 'leaders' but his heart, and here we touch on a subject of tremendous sensitivity, led him to simply play, paint and be himself.

Music helped him sort out these contradictions in his soul, not the artificiality of festivals and the packaging of CDs. Simply playing a musical instrument and vocalising (John had a beautiful voice and a vocabulary of sounds that was utterly unique. There was a variety of odd sucking and slurping noises and bilabial plosives, for example, a treatise on which would be highly inappropriate for such an upstanding periodical as **Rubberneck**) is denied to people more and more as is simple education and ultimately hope for the future. 'Improvisation' *is* a young person's music but the obstacles, often from within the music itself, preclude any participation for most (he was wonderfully Luddite in his horror of the rise and rise of knob-twiddlers culture with their somewhat cerebral frissons).

There was strong respect for musicians 'making their way' in the world, raising families, with ambition and purpose whilst retaining integrity. This would, however, be oddly disturbing when the equanimity was too close.

A few points about his last gig may help to sum up this little essay. It was at the Priory Arms in London and run by Alan Tomlinson and Dave Tucker. A previous jazz gig on the Medway, for £40-£50, had been a nightmare as he had attempted to get his big kit there and back. Problems hammering in, no money for a cab so, because of the distance from the tube, he turned up with trumpet only. As the night wore on he fell back on all his resources and sensed, as he always did in these circumstances, that this was improvisation at its best, on this occasion readily accepting the reality of being unable to play drums. Alan Tomlinson was horrified at the prospect of no kit and clicking trumpet, but even his determinedly individual sensibilities finally warmed, after years of grumbling, to what John was about that night. The Little Theatre Club ethos was alive and kicking in John's every sound, gesture and comment. The strangely British form of Ayleresque spirituality was all pervasive. And nobody taped it, much to his chagrin.

In recent years the playing had a tendency to be less precise and focused with more broadened

His ego could somehow picture himself as one of these 'leaders' but his heart, and here we touch on a subject of tremendous sensitivity, led him to simply play, paint and be himself.

and flattened strokes (David Solomon, a drum student of the late-60s noted that during that period the precise touch was of prime importance and was driven home to distraction in his lessons). A moment's silence was no longer demanded before playing and a wonderful sense of the absurd was encroaching a little into the music; for example, drum kits could collapse signifying the end of the shows. There were no longer any public statements of total abstinence from drink, etc, a regular occurrence at one time, and less and less desire to perform pieces. Titles became more infrequent. Periods of deep fragility and sensitivity were obvious. Immersion in the improvised music scene

tired him and travel appealed less and less. He liked to chill-out in leafy Ealing and spend time in the local pub trying to sort things out.

contradictions

As always contradiction piled on contradiction. To hell with tomorrow; precious concern for the future. Almost embarrassing revelatory detail; massively guarded secrets (the subject matter of some late painting was personal and so painful that it is unlikely they hung publicly). Out of touch with the detail of new music; very much in touch with the general direction of new music. And so on and so forth.

The wonderfully warped sense of political correctness was as strong as ever, as was the deep understanding and sadness about the darker aspects of human nature and the hugely important place the arts have in neutralising this. And it's all there in the music.

John Stevens remained consistent to his ideals, and demands no less from us in the years to come.

Shout going out to Anne, Richie and Louise. **R**

The John Stevens Collection
At The National Sound Archive

In addition to most of John's published records and CDs, the collection includes a wealth of unreleased live, studio and radio recordings, and a long interview for the NSA's **Oral History** project.

Radio sessions range from a 1965 *Jazz Club* broadcast by the John Stevens Septet to the final SME broadcast on *Music In Our Time* (6/94). The **studio recordings** include film soundtracks (1966) and unissued SME albums such as **Seeing Sounds & Hearing Colours** (2/67), **Familie** (1968) and outtakes from published albums such as **Challenge**, and **Oliv; Double Trio** (3/68) has John sharing his kit with American drummer Rashied Ali, whilst **In Order Of Appearance** (6/91) features the late Bobby Bradford. Other excellent studio dates feature John's groups Away (1975-), Detail (1980-) and a set of duos with Evan Parker (8/92). Almost all of John's groups and musical associations over the years are documented in **live recordings**, including a notable series by Martin Davidson from the Little Theatre Club (1973-74). Of particular value are those by groups which were either undocumented or under-represented on record, such as Fast Colour (1988) and the post-1977 versions of the SME.

For more detailed information on the collection or the NSA listening service, please telephone Paul Wilson on 0171 412 7434, or write to The National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS.

Paul Wilson

John Stevens on CD

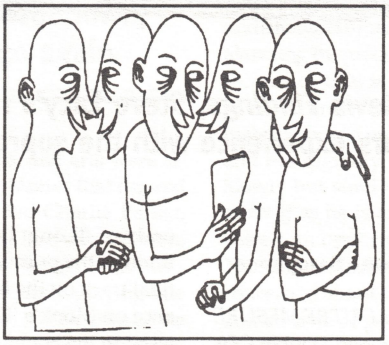
During the transition from vinyl to CD much of the John Stevens back catalogue has drifted into a limbo of indefinite unavailability; consequently, some the landmark recordings in the history of European free improvisation are no longer available to a younger generation of listeners who can't/won't pay the ludicrous prices now being asked for some of these recordings on the second-hand LP market.

Thankfully, in recent years, a few labels motivated by artistic integrity rather than the potential for profitability on reissues, have transferred John Stevens' work to CD. While Chronoscope Records has reissued the seminal 1968 SME recording **Karyobin** (see the review in **Rubberneck 16**), the Berlin-based Konnex Records has reissued five albums to date, which reflect the variety of Stevens' stylistic interests. Here are three of them...

Big Band & Quintet (Konnex KCD 5045) comprises a 20-minute big band piece dating from 1971, followed by three quintet pieces from 1975. The former, 'Let's Sing For Him (A March For Albert Ayler)', proceeds with the moving *gravitas* of a New Orleans funeral march, interlaced with much spirited improvising from the 21-strong SME Big Band. The five female vocalists (Julie Tippetts, the Nichols

sisters, Carolann and Maggie, Pepe Lemer and Norma Winstone) bring the piece to a soaring climax with the repetitions of the title taking on an almost mantric intensity. Four drummers, two bassists and pianists, and a horn section including Wheeler, Carr, Watts and Warleigh provide the instrumental weight to keep the work on track for its duration. This gig must have been quite a spectacle all those years ago — the emotional impact of its uplifting music has not lessened.

The quintet pieces featuring Kenny Wheeler, Ray Warleigh, Trevor Watts, Jeff Clyne and JS are in the 'freebop' mode, a delightfully agile play of theme and variations, constantly pushed and pulled by Stevens' subtle shifts in tempo and dynamics — even his more robust accents have a gorgeous, springy lightness that injects an irresistible fizz into these pieces.



Re-Touch & Quartet (Konnex KCD 5027) typifies John Stevens' remarkable facility for exploring widely differing soundworlds through small group improvisation. The first half of this collection consists of two pieces by a 1977 quartet/quintet featuring Allan Holdsworth (electric guitar), Jeff Young (piano), Barry Guy (bass), for the 37-minute 'No Fear', plus Ron Mathewson (bass) for the short and rhythmically punchy 'Re-Touch'. The longer work begins in a riffy, fusion vein with Young's glassy electric piano rippling over the rhythm section's choppy metres. Young's piano becomes acoustic and more lyrical, and by halfway the sonic architecture has turned romantic chamber jazz, courtesy of the melodic counterpoint between Young and Holdsworth. The guitarist eschews those characteristically intricate and sometimes directionless solos, adapting superbly to a more collective, less soloistic context. Throughout, it's Stevens' highly inventive, restive drum and cymbalplay that keeps the rhythmic impetus in a state of flux.

'One, Two, Albert Ayler, Birds Of A Feather, Nothing' is another extended piece from the 1971 London gig that spawned the aforementioned 'Let's Sing For Him' on **Big Band & Quintet**. JS is joined by Julie Tippetts, Trevor Watts and Ron Herman. Grooveless abstraction, often dense with fragmented flurries of activity peaking and diving. Watts' sax is particularly strong, but Tippetts' vocals have travelled less well across the passage of time — soprano wails and yodels that lack interesting colour and variety. The sensitive forays into fusion and chamber jazz on this disc sound a deal more persuasive than the radical abstraction.

Some of the material on **A Luta Continua** (Konnex KCD 5056) by the John Stevens Dance Orchestra was recorded between 1977 and 1981 with group numbers ranging from seven to 17. Stevens refers to a notion of "rhythmelodic" statements, where each rhythm has a melodic content and vice-versa; the nine pieces are also about playing in and outside of time simultaneously — some instruments holding down a groove while others run free, then swapping roles. 'Humble Seamen Hayes' recalls the extended jazz-rock line-ups of late 60s/early 70s Soft Machine; the short, interlocking rhythms of 'Sandwich' suggest a favourable meeting place for jazz improv and minimalism. This is an album that is sure to grow in stature after each hearing.

Finally, **New Cool** (The Jazz Label TJL006) by the John Stevens Quartet (with Ed Jones, saxes; Byron Wallen, trumpet & flugelhorn; and Gary Crosby, bass), recorded at the Crawley Jazz Festival in 1992, combines freebop (or is it freecool?) and rhythmelodics ideas to produce an accessible sound with room for soloists to stretch out and collective playing to reach an occasional intensity. John Stevens is behind everything, busy guiding, coaxing and generally creating space for others to sound good in. They conclude with 'Dudu's Gone', a tribute to another departed, inspirational, eclectic jazz master. **R**

Chris Blackford

(Konnex Records and The Jazz Label are distributed by New Note: 01689 877884) Above drawing by **John Stevens**.

Evan Parker reviews *Findings*, Steve Lacy's new book based on over 40 years experience with the soprano saxophone

Findings
My Experience With The Soprano Saxophone
Steve Lacy
Co-published by CMAP & Éditions OUTRE MESURE
(large format paperback, 224pp, and Double CD)

It has been rumoured for some time now that Steve Lacy was working on a book. Such a book would automatically be of intense interest to soprano saxophone players, other musicians interested in Lacy's methods and of course Steve's wider audience.

This publication has something for each of those categories of potential reader. Because of the complexity of its make up however, it seems designed to defy short description. First there is the two part nature — book plus double CD. Then each of those parts requires further description: the recorded material in part illustrates the technical exercises and musical materials which are given in the book, but furthermore it is in part straight-ahead recordings of performances which are then transcribed and analysed.

There are 40 identification numbers on the two CDs beginning with the sound of "Warming The Instrument Up" for 11 seconds followed by 51 seconds of "Long Tones" working progressively through the printed exercise material until by the final track on the first CD there is a solo performance on Monk's 'Evidence', transcribed and analysed in the book by Daniel Beaussier.

catholic approach

The first track on the second CD is a version of part of Webern's op.17, originally written for vocal soprano with instrumental accompaniment (the text for the first of the three "traditional rhymes" incidentally begins, "Wretched sinner, you, the earth it is your shoe..." — grim stuff!). This is followed immediately by a version of Charlie Parker's 'Confirmation' (there are perhaps Catholic undertones to this juxtaposition but more likely Lacy's wry humour at work); the inclusion of such material will have the effect of encouraging in the readers at least a catholic approach in the search for practise material.

The recordings then move through a sequence of duo, trio and quartet pieces with Steve Potts, Irene Aebi, Bobby Few, Jean-Jacques Avenil and John Betsch, the members of Steve's regular group, concluding with 'Saxovision' in a version for solo

soprano saxophone with Lacy's voice overdubbed in parts.

The book is beautifully designed and printed. All musical material is given in Bb and Concert pitch versions. The book will lay workably flat on a table or music stand. In addition to the etude material and supporting practical and philosophical reflections, anecdotes and autobiographical sections written by Steve Lacy, there are also a biography and condensed answers-only versions of many magazine interviews. The inclusion of the interview with Steve Beresford, Paul Burwell, Herman Hauge and David Toop from issue 12 of **Musics** gives some idea of how thoroughly this section has been researched! Discographical, transcription and analytical materials by Beaussier and Vincent Laine are also very accomplished.

Soprano players will be very interested in Steve's "Book 'H' of Practitioners", which he describes as: "Deliberately made so as to be hard to play, they also contain many of the characteristic 'licks', which comprise the language that I use, in the different kinds of improvisational musics that I perform in."

We are lucky to have such a wonderful compendium from the man who introduced John Coltrane to the soprano saxophone and by that act alone saved it from certain extinction.

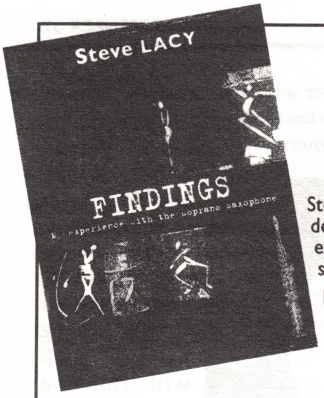
His fingerings for the altissimo register, moving chromatically to the Bb, an eleventh above top F, will keep the rest of us busy for awhile! The influence of Sigurd Rascher's pioneering book **Top Tones** is in evidence and acknowledged in this section but Steve has some nice variations, the most personal being the section called "Ain't She Sweet", which is concerned with developing the ability to bend notes flat of the fingered position. As he emphasises: "This is a difficult exercise and will sound horrible until you can do it well." The technique mastered in this way will also bring benefits in control of the smaller adjustments needed to humour (ie, to improve the tuning of) particular notes on any given instrument. By modifying this idea I have already started to develop an exercise concerned with bending harmonics. I have the feeling that the book will function well this way, spawning many variant offshoot ideas for study.

photo: FMP

There is a useful set of scale and arpeggio types including his so-called "Monk b7 arpeggio" using scale steps II, III, VI and bVII which will encourage active thinking on which notes characterise which harmonic structures most interestingly. The section called "Tight Corners" goes even deeper into this discipline with practical examples that lead on to the idea of constructing similar exercises for yourself.

Instead of practising figures around the cycle of fifths, Lacy proposes a different cycle which is a tone row of limited transposition in which the opposite positions on the clock face are a semitone apart (in the given version Bb, E, C, F#, D, Ab, B, F, Db, G, Eb, A, his "magic" order).

This particular sequence breaks into two halves of alternate tritones and minor sixths, the second six notes being the first six up a semitone. This is certainly a good idea which can be used first in the given form and then once mastered used in other transpositions and then perhaps entirely other versions using other tone rows. Some of Steve's thinking here may be influenced by Slonimsky's **Thesaurus**, another of the source ma-



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FINDINGS

My experience with the soprano saxophone

(selected excerpts)

DEMONSTRATION / EXERCISES

WAKING THE INSTRUMENT UP — Long Tones • Harmonics: "*When I begin my daily practice, I start by going through the natural harmonics.*" • The Magic Order • Bugle Boy • Bending Notes

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TIGHT CORNERS — "*Don't be afraid to sound bad!*"

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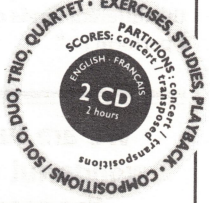
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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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APPENDIX

Selected bibliography on Steve Lacy *(conversations & studies)* • Steve Lacy's discography • Recommended books & records

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terials he recommends for further study. The great thing about this kind of systematic practise is that the material expands to infinity like the dots on Bucky's balloon. (The more you know, the more you know you don't know!)

fierce protagonist

The texts are presented for the most part in both French and English. There are many great photographs and facsimile reproductions of the manuscript versions of many of the pieces, including Steve's notes to himself and stuck in photos of the dedicatees. There is plenty here to help us identify and understand the wide range of literary, artistic and philosophical influences which have helped shape Steve's thinking. We are lucky to have such a wonderful compendium from the man who introduced John Coltrane to the soprano saxophone and by that act alone saved it from certain extinction. He is also the instrument's most distinguished practitioner and fiercest protagonist, and from the evidence here is clearly still excited by its potential even after giving it more than 40 years study.

CMAP and Outre Mesure have brought to the production all the feelings of a labour of love. It is obviously essential for students of soprano saxophone and in fact for anyone who wants to go deeper into Steve Lacy's music and thought. *C'est magnifique!* **R**

__Evan Parker__ (born 1944) is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and influential exponents of the soprano saxophone in improvised music. He has made the following solo soprano recordings: __Saxophone Solos__ (Incus, 1975); __Monoceros__ (Incus, 1978); __At The Finger Palace__ (The Beak Doctor, 1978); __Six Of One__ (Incus, 1980); __The Snake Decides__ (Incus, 1986); __Conic Sections__ (Ah Um, 1989); __Process And Reality__ (FMP, 1991). He has also made a soprano duet album, __Chirps__ (FMP, 1985), with Steve Lacy, while __Three Blokes__ (FMP, 1992) includes two Lacy/Parker soprano duets.

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Prime cuts

Popol Vuh
Best Of Popol Vuh: From The Films Of Werner Herzog
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The many collaborations between German composer Florian Fricke (with his group Popol Vuh) and fellow countryman, film-maker Werner Herzog, are almost unique in the cinema of recent decades: conjure up the exotic landscapes of the latter's epic feature films and you start to hear the former's music (perhaps the Nyman-Greenaway collaborations are the only other in recent times to have attained a similar level of music-image symbiosis). Yes, Fricke and Herzog speak the same expressionistic language, often cloaked in *Stimmung* — that special Teutonic mood described by film historian Lotte Eisner as "a mystical and singular harmony amid the chaos of things, a kind of sorrowful nostalgia... mixed with well-being... languor coloured with desire, lust of body and soul." (**The Haunted Screen**)

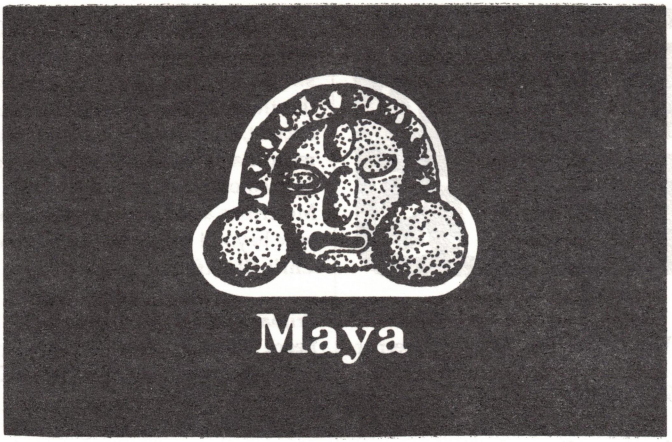
Florian Fricke

Three pieces from **Nosferatu** (1979) and **Fitzcarraldo** (1982), two from **Cobra Verde** (1988) and one each from **Gasherbrum** (1985) and **Aguirre, Wrath Of God** (1972). All are grandiose in conception, atmospherically counterbalancing choral arrangements (shades of Carl Orff) with the lyrical folk-rock of Popol Vuh. 'A Different World' (from **Cobra Verde**) is sumptuous, dreamy *adagio* strings, suffused with that "sorrowful nostalgia"; 'Brothers Of Darkness' (from **Nosferatu**) evokes ancient, supernatural malevolence tinged with irreconcilable despair. Florian Fricke's film music is as memorable and as distinctive as the work of Morricone and Rota. It's time he reached an audience beyond the realm of Krautrock diehards.
Chris Blackford

Prima Materia
Peace On Earth (Music Of John Coltrane)
Knitting Factory Works KFW158 CD

Tribute albums risk relegation to subsidiary status, worthy worship at the vacant shrine. It's sad to see someone like Pharoah Sanders — paradoxically, least tainted by imitation when actually playing in Coltrane's band in the 60s — replicate late 'cosmic' Trane, as he did on his English tour in 1994. Jan Kopinski negotiated this no-go area by developing a comparable intensity and collective uplift in another genre, that of funk; Peter Brötzmann by insisting on a highly individual ugliness; Derek Bailey and Lol Coxhill by subverting any hint of monumentality whatsoever. Players as strong (and various) as Gerd Dudek, Paul Dunmall, Courtney Pine and Marilyn Crispell, though, can fall into the trap: they are all at their weakest when echoing The Master.

Prima Materia are one of the few tribute bands to work. This is largely due to the presence of Rashied Ali, drummer in Trane's last band. His magisterial playing underlies the best recordings by David Murray and Blood Ulmer (in other words, Ali helped realise some of the most important music of the 80s). His brutal force and metric expansion — an intoxicating blend of kettledrum and knittingneedle — ensure Prima Materia never sound replicant; his 'Brazilia' drum solo is an object lesson in torrential sensuality and organisational reserve. Two basses (William Parker and Joe Gallant) emulate a late Trane line-up; their percussive attacks mesh with Ali's toms and bass-drum into a relentless polyrhythmic matrix, almost a drum orchestra. The saxophonists are at their best when least Trane-ish: Allan Chase's derivative soprano is irritating, while Louis Belogenis' tenor —



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all squalls and distortion, no attempt at Coltrane's muezzin transcendence — is chunky and fulsome. John Zorn guests on two tracks, his trademark cry offsetting the group's warm churn with a welcome tartness. Best of all when all three play at once, spattering us with updown kaleidoscopes.

Prima Materia recall the integral impact of Coltrane's music, a much needed reminder when Mike Brecker's limited take on some of his mid-period sax stylings is lauded as the summit of excellence. The concluding 'Alabama' is majestic in its splendour and melancholy. Applause at the end is enthusiastic, but comes from a tiny audience: a sad indication of the fact that, despite the way Coltrane has been plundered by record companies and heritage mongers, this authentic rendition of his protest against a racist atrocity has been relegated to one of the smallest (if most courageous) venues in the States.

Ben Watson

Houtkamp/Beukman/Prins & Johannes Bauer
Metslawier
X-OR CD 05 CD

Hans Reichel
Lower Lurum
Rastascan Records BRD 016 CD

Luc Houtkamp (b. 1953) is maybe Holland's best-kept secret. Each of the three well-recorded CDs he has released on his own label shows a different side of this saxophonist/comprovisor/serious practitioner of computer music. **The Songlines** (1991) emphasises his innovative playing techniques and his attention to timbre in a solo context. **The Rule Of Thumb** (1993) shows various collaborations: a duo with George Lewis' trombone, a live dialogue with Richard Teitelbaum's devices, and a long, beautiful piece for saxophone and tape co-composed with the late Tony van Campen. Two tracks for saxophone and computer show the depth and originality of Houtkamp's explorations.

Metslawier (1994) is a quartet recording. Houtkamp and trombonist Bauer play admirably: they're bold, funny, original, but it's the rhythm section that gives this group its distinctive flavour and whose driving motions delivered in dry tones propel the front line (and since you've broken into the piggy bank also get Gene Carl's **Gray Matter**, for piano and electronics — same label).

Speaking of well-kept secrets, how come that I often see long lists of fine guitarists and Hans Reichel's name isn't there? Kudos to California-based Rastascan for releasing his new CD. 27 tracks, mostly brief, mostly improvised (for more on the man see **Rubberneck 16**). Those already familiar with Reichel's work will find the usual excellence: the tasty sonic explorations, his classic sense of beauty, his melodic ruminations — so clear, so familiar, yet always ready to throw the listener a curve.

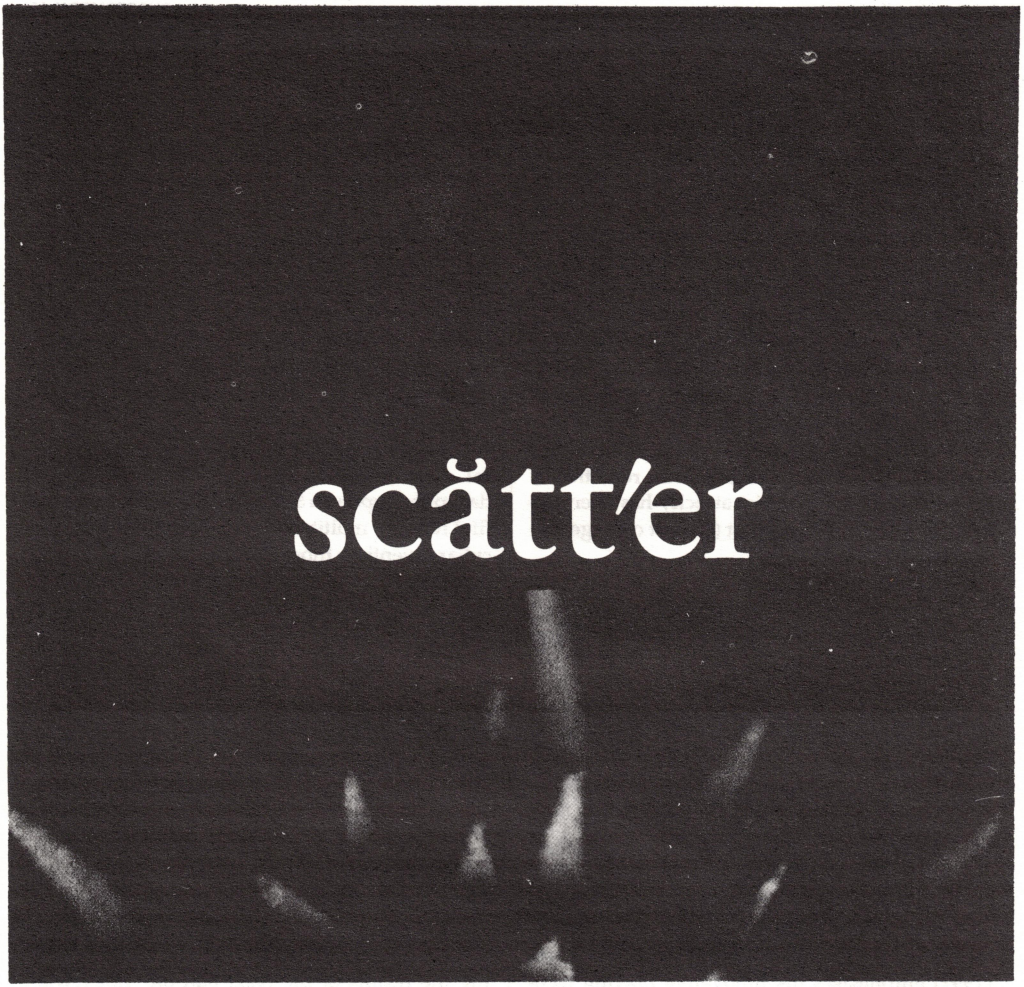
Lower Lurum presents a variety of instrumental combinations. Those who enjoyed the daxophone operetta **Shanghaied On Tor Road** will find here the multitracked moods of Reichel's peculiar invention; those who prefer him in his guitar builder/player mode will get plenty of it. Newcomers are in for a surprise. *(X-OR, P.O. Box 13435 - 2501, EK Den Haag, Holland.*
Rastascan Records, P.O. Box 3073, San Leandro, CA 94578-3073, USA)

Giuseppe Colli

Zentralquartett
Plie
Intakt CDO37 CD

The problem that besets British jazz — from Ray Noble and Ronnie Scott to Barbara Thompson and Andy Sheppard — is light-music, 'Radio 2' gentility; in Germany it is what Michael Kator (describing the results of the Nazi ban on "hot Jewish music") called "the bane of German jazz, the dreaded 'um-papa' sound" (**Different Drummers**, p116). Here, four free music veterans from East Berlin (Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky, alto; Ulrich Gumpert, piano; Connie Bauer, trombone; Günter Sommer, percussion) have decided to ease up, let some 'dance music' in. Unfortunately, this opens the door to "the bane of German jazz": despite Carla Bley-style sarcasm, the jokes are too clumsy (and the arrangements too unplanned) to save us from 'um-papa'.

From the ideological squirmings of Christian Broeking's German sleevenotes (the translation into 'English' by Susan Kaufmann-Guyer is impen-



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etrable), the musicians seem to regret the collapse of Communism and the lack of opportunities for lucrative 'protest music' tours since the Wall came down in 1989. This is to put the cart before the horse with a vengeance: some free jazz players might have found a niche during the Cold War, but that is hardly reason to wax nostalgic about nuclear standoffs and the *Stasi*! Still, like the difficulties encountered in the 90s by the Ganelin Trio and Sergey Kuryokhin in Russia, such protests at least demonstrate that the market has not been quite the cure-all promised by the British press during the Velvet Revolutions.

As usual, Connie Bauer plays gorgeous trombone, though one misses the embattled strenuousness that stretched him to the limit in previous ensembles. Sell out by all means, gentlemen, but not to the *Bierkeller*.

Ben Watson

Paul Dunmall/Tony Levin
Spiritual Empathy: Duets 1994
Rare Music RM024 CD

Paul Dunmall/Paul Rogers
Folks
Slam CD212 CD

As their titles make clear both these new CDs featuring Paul Dunmall wear their allegiances on their sleeves, if you'll pardon the pun. Which means whether you enjoy them is probably a matter of black and white.

The **Spiritual Empathy** duets look back very clearly to Coltrane in their soundworld, their musical form and even their titles. Both Dunmall (alto and tenor saxes) and Levin (drums) are superbly fluent performers, able to sustain peaks of energy and invention for very long periods, and (even more impressive) sustain an overall shape, demonstrated by the remarkable sense of *completion* at the end of, say, tracks 1 and 5. They create a feeling of continual flow and are then suddenly able to focus it, and explode out again without any hesitation or awkwardness. Levin's drumming on track 5 is to me particularly magical, an outstanding use of the classic drum and cymbal kit.

Folks, I have to admit, left me cold. I feel that the folk idiom has been mined in jazz with much greater conviction by John Surman or Jan Garbarek, to name just two. The short pieces on this album (mostly compositions by either Dunmall or Rogers, with an enjoyable but brief performance by singer Polly Bolton on one track) generally seem studied, even in the 'free' passages. The recordings also sound a little on the dull side. They move around between jazz and folk without convincing me, at least, what direction the disc finally is moving in. Only in the Paul Rogers composition 'Lament 4' does the folk territory spring to life, with enough harmonic interest and enough ambiguity to make this a very moving piece, though all too brief. Both Dunmall and Rogers are inspirational players — it's a shame to hear them reining themselves in with limited material. *(Rare Music, Asterton Hall Farm, Lydbury North, Shropshire SY7 8BH, England)*
Nick Couldry

Something Else
Start Moving Earbuds
Discus 2CD/Bruce's Fingers BF10 CD

Akemi Kuniyoshi/Russell Lambert/Paul Moss
ARP Music
Leo Lab CD 004 CD

Something Else are Mick Beck on tenor sax, Simon H Fell on double bass and Paul Hession on drums and cymbals. This disc consists of live tracks recorded in 1993 in Manchester, Luton and Southampton, and follows their 1992 **Rear Quarters** cassette. Although recorded in concert, the six tracks play straight through, uninterrupted by applause.

The name Something Else is employed to indicate that this is different to their work with other people. In particular, those of you familiar with Fell and Hession's trio work with Alan Wilkinson (**foom! foom!** and **The Horrors Of Darmstadt**) should note that this is very different. Beck employs a much greater dynamic range than Wilkinson. At times he does adopt a furious, headlong approach, as on the opening 'Manchester Bus Station'. Elsewhere though, his playing can be barely audible as he produces very lightly blown passages, or playfully rhythmic and melodic, as on Fell's 'Jumbo's'. Fell and Hession support, goad and complement Beck, playing the role of rhythm

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section to perfection. Hession's credit — "drums and cymbals" — is significant; his use of a variety of cymbals as punctuation is truly innovative. This is fresh, exciting music that holds the attention and fires the imagination; even 'Norman', the longest track here at over 20 minutes, whizzed by.

Leo Records chose Kuniyoshi's trio as one of the inaugural releases on Leo Lab, its new experimental subsidiary. Kuniyoshi has recorded for Leo before, both solo and in a trio with Eddie Prévost and Marcio Mattos, but this is her first release with Paul Moss and Russell Lambert, despite the fact that their partnership dates back over 12 years. Lambert and Moss play an astonishing array of instruments between them — Lambert's are essentially percussive and Moss' predominantly reeds but including brass and guitar. Between them they lay down a shifting backdrop over which Kuniyoshi adds her very distinctive piano. Her playing, which is clearly rooted in a classical training, has a clarity, precision and logic which commands attention whatever Moss and Lambert are playing. A fine start to Leo's new venture.
John Eyles

Billy Jenkins
Entertainment USA
Babel BDV9401 CD

A Billy Jenkins disc reveals new levels of thought and irony on each listening. At first, **Entertainment USA** is pleasant but curiously flat, pattering on with its basic formats, almost like a Hank Crawford or Boots Randolph album. However, Jenkins injects his Anglo-MOR with two lethal spikes: absolutely bravura guitar, and a highly developed awareness of the socio-politico implications of schlock. You can sit around and ponder these musings on Reagan, Manson, Elvis, etc., for hours. In other words, Jenkins has cunningly confected the ideal domestic soundtrack: Country enough to make the average ambient snob turn purple, it's also great dinner-party/cannabis music — just as everyone's starting to get out of it, bizarre insights and brilliant guitar vault out of the subliminal. Sublime.

NB: Buyers of this album should be warned that due to a series of predictable coincidences (involving Babel advertising campaigns; astrologer and poet Don Stallybrass; the asteroids Fides and Zappafrank; bikini-designer Laetitia Allen; and the Portsmouth telephone directory) the number 42 may well become an unavoidable presence in your life.
Ben Watson

Christian Marclay/Günter Müller
Live Improvisations
For 4 Ears CD513 CD

Eddie Prévost/Marilyn Crispell
Band On The Wall
Matchless Recordings MRCD25 CD

Conversation, the two-way exchange, has always exerted a special fascination in improvised music. From the days of the Parker/Stevens SME, through such events as Bailey 'n' Braxton and Cecil Taylor's Berlin concerts, to more recent things such as the Elliott Sharp and Zeena Parkins pairing, the impurity of dialogue, with its imperfect democracy, has epitomised the sensitivity and risk of spontaneous music.

The Marclay/Müller is the more disputatious of these two quite different collaborations. Müller pits his percussion and electronics against Marclay's faintly Luddite turntable proto-sampling. Listening to Marclay manipulate other people's music rapidly is clearly supposed to be a radically dislocating experience, but in the end it's more like an inspired heaping up of detritus that defiantly goes precisely nowhere. Valuable as a destabilising ambience perhaps, but listening hard throughout isn't one of the uses I'd put it to — I'd simply lose interest. There's always another scratchy bit of kitsch around the corner. Müller brings a fevered percussive imagination to the music, beats to rough up the cut-ups, but in the end it's a very unfocused sort of energy. Maybe the most engaging thing about the album is the sheer speed of invention of the two protagonists, just the sort of response to proficiency they'd find deplorable. Great for doing the housework to, though.

The Crispell/Prévost duet is a recording of a concert recorded at the Band On The Wall club in Manchester in May 1994. Piano and drums: in some ways a more limited palette than that available to

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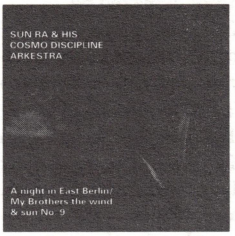
LEO RECORDS NEW RELEASES SPRING 1995

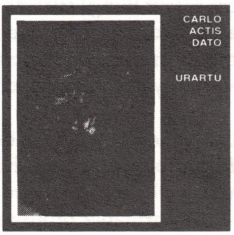
CD LR 112 THE GANELIN TRIO
OLD BOTTLES...

A two-part suite by the legendary former-Soviet trio. First part, "Non-Troppo", recorded live in West Berlin at the Akademie der Kunste in 1983. Second part, "New Wine", recorded live in Riga in 1982 . NON-TROPPO is the most tragic work in the huge repertoire of Ganelin, Tarasov, and Chekasin, who, on this occasion, stunned the audience into complete silence - it forgot to clap. Total time: 77'14.



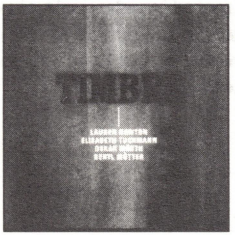
CD LR 149 LE SUN RA AND HIS COSMO DISCIPLINE ARKESTRA
A NIGHT IN EAST BERLIN/MY BROTHERS THE WIND AND SUN

First 38 minutes of this CD had been previously released on CD LR 149 "A night in East Berlin", but long unavailable. The second part of the CD, "My brothers the wind and sun n.9", is a newly discovered piece of over 20 minutes, previously unreleased. Essential Sun Ra, avant-cosmology. Total time: 59'02.



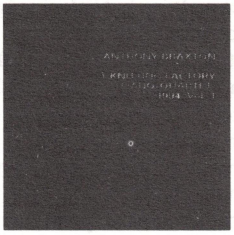
CD LR 220 CARLO ACTIS DATO
URARTU

A solo CD by one of the heroes of the Italian new music scene. 16 compositions performed on baritone and tenor saxophones, and bass clarinet. Purely Italian stuff, and nobody can do it better. 14 original compositions, 2 jazz standards, and 59 munites and 53 seconds of fun, entertainment and intelligence.



CD LR 221 LAUREN NEWTON / ELISABETH TUCHMANN / OSKAR MORTH / BERTL MUTTER;
TIMBRE

An all-voice quartet, two females, two males. The music of the TIMBRE came into being after seven years of singing together. It is highly individual and totally unique. The singers constantly surprise themselves by creating ever new rhythms and harmonies through all 19 pieces of different durations. The history of mankind through the human voice. My idea of heaven. Might be yours too.



CD LR 222/223 ANTHONY BRAXTON
KNITTING FACTORY (PIANO/QUARTET) 1994, VOL.1

Anthony Braxton plays piano. We have been waiting for this, haven't we? Two discs, 10 jazz standards, over 75 minutes each disc. Joking aside, this double CD will probably finish a heated discussion in the media of what is jazz and what is not. But do you think the Marsalis brothers will ever have the courage to listen to this and the intelligence to understand it? I'd love to hear from you. Marty Ehrlich on reeds, Joe Fonda on bass, Pheeroan AkLaff on drums.

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Marclay and Müller, but it's an infinitely richer album, blowing all the irony and pessimistic relativism of M&M sky high. Crispell gets better and better and Prévost seems the perfect drummer for her — there's a propulsive force at work between them that pushes the music into ever more fertile territory. It's an incredibly balanced exchange and it simply doesn't let up (the brief, punctuating solo pieces work as a part of the main action). It would be false to characterise it as music from the gut, but there is a kind of charge that this music carries that's extremely hard to pin down. There's absolutely nothing thrashy or indelicate about the way the two work up this electricity either; it's a buzz but helluva developed one. When I'm next burgled (burglar: are you there?) I hope this one gets left behind, because it's one of the most vital pieces of improvised music (or any music for that matter) I've ever heard. *(For 4 Ears, Steinechtweg 16, CH-4452 Itingen, Switzerland. Matchless Recordings, 2 Shetlock's Cottage, Matching Tye, nr. Harlow, Essex CM17 OQS, England)*

Eddie Prévost

Will Montgomery

Mike Keneally
hat.
Guitar Recordings/Immune 9714-99303-2 CD

Mike Keneally
Boil That Dust Speck
Immune Records IMM 1005 CD

Is 'intelligent rock' an oxymoron? Does 'progressive rock' equal 'Jurassic rock'? Whatever your answer, check these CDs by Mike Keneally, a thirtysomething American guitarist/keyboardist/vocalist (you may have seen/heard him with Frank Zappa's last live band or in the well-meant but shoddily presented CD tribute **Zappa's Universe**).

Keneally's universe is an original, strange dimension where European influences — say, XTC, Albert Marcoeur, Gentle Giant's lyricism and knottiness — mingle with American rock and pop (not to mention Zappa). It must be said that Keneally never uses his considerable guitaristic abilities as an easy way out. He has a lot of humour (how could one resist a song like 'Eno And The Actor'), and these very long CDs are almost devoid of weak moments. Between the more pop-orientated **hat.** (1993) and the more convoluted **Boil...** (1994), it's not an easy choice. Snap 'em both up. *(Contact: G&S Music, 7 Ullswater Road, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 8RD, England)*

Giuseppe Colli

William Hooker/Lee Ranaldo
Envisioning
Knitting Factory Works KFW159 CD

Lesego Rampolokeng with The Kalahari Surfers
End Beginnings
ReR Recommended LRSCDI CD

These two albums provide contrasting combinations of music with the spoken word. Still a comparatively rare phenomenon outside of rap, the successful fusion of poetry and music relies on the two complementing and enhancing each other. Both these recordings achieve this — but there any similarity ends.

William Hooker's album with Lee Ranaldo follows his earlier collaboration with Thurston Moore and Elliott Sharp. The 50 minutes on offer here were recorded live at the Knitting Factory in May 1994. Unfortunately, the album gets off to a weak start with a stumbling, rambling recitation about a Richard Avedon photograph, which has little point to it. Things improve from there, as the performers get into their stride and feel comfortable with the audience. The combination of poetry and music falls into the Jim Morrison/Horse Latitudes tradition, with the instruments providing an abstract backdrop, commentary and sound effects. Ranaldo's guitar and synth combine with Hooker's fierce drumming to produce soundscapes which vary between hypnotically rhythmic and wildly free. Content of the verse ranges from

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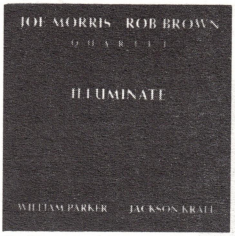
LEO LAB CD 007
GREEN ROOM;
HIDDEN MUSIC

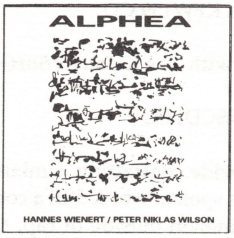
GREEN ROOM is where sounds are allowed to happen, structures are vehicles for getting around.There is no single point of reference, the centre is everywhere.

Chick Lyall, David Baird and David Garrett are from Scotland. On ten pieces of this CD they produce sounds on 15 different instruments. Duration 58 min.



LEO LAB CD 008
JOE MORRIS/ROB BROWN QUARTET;
ILLUMINATE

"Where are the guitarists of new music? Substract the ones identified with Prime Time and their harmolodic ilk; take away the crowd indebted to Derek Bailey, the abstract improvisors; omit Elliot Sharp, Caspar Brotzmann and the noise merchants, and who's left? Well, there is this one guy in Boston, named Joe Morris" (Art Lange, WIRE). Rob Brown is a young new star from New York playing alto saxophone.



LEO LAB CD 009
HANNES WIENERT/ PETER NIKLAS WILSON; ***ALPHEA***

ALPHEA was formed in Hamburg in 1991. Hannes Wienert (alto and soprano saxophones, trumpet) and Peter Niklas Wilson (bass) perform in jazz clubs, art galleries and on jazz and contemporary music festivals, playing music structured exclusively by their own concepts. On this CD they bring you 12 compositions, the overall duration of the disc is 62'21.

LEO LAB CD 010
JOE MANERI QUARTET;
GET READY TO RECEIVE YOURSELF

Who has ever heard of micro-tonal music? And who has ever heard of Joe Maneri? However, if George Russell, Paul Bley, Ran Blake and Cecil Taylor tell us that he is a genius, there must be a grain of truth in it. Joe Maneri - reeds, Mat Maneri - violin, John Lockwood - bass, Randy Peterson - drums.

LEO LAB CD 011
LOKOMOTIV KONKRET;
KEIN ABER

"Lokomotiv Konkret" has existed since 1975 and is the catalyst of new wave of Swedish free imporovised music. It has toured Israel, Russia, USA, Europe.

The group presents the ultimate concept of free music without compromise. "Lokomotiv Konkret" is Dror Feiler on reeds, Tommy Bjork on drums, and Soren Runoff on electric guitar, cello and synth. Duration -73 minutes.

LEO LAB CD 012
GIORGIO OCCHIPINTI HEREO NONETTO; ***THE KAOS LEGEND***

American, European, Russian musicians... be on the alert! Your superiority has just been shattered by the hot Mediterraneon sound of Hereo Nonetto. Giorgio Occhipinti is 25-year-old pianist/composer from Sicily. He is a product of classical European music, contemporary music, Sicilian folk music, jazz, the Italian opera, free American and European music, the Mediterranean, the South, Nino Rota. 64 minutes of unforgettable experience.

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deeply personal, highly specific vignettes, to portentous, metaphysical observations on life, the universe and everything. Often the words have been chosen for sound, rather than to convey meaning, and this becomes tiresome. By the end, I wanted to hear more of the music without the words.

Rampolokeng's poetry is a total contrast to Hooker's (maybe highlighting the difference between living and writing in South Africa and in the US). Hard-hitting, politicised and pithy, it is rooted in the struggle against apartheid and comes across like a telegram from the frontline. Yet, the poetry avoids being agitprop, constantly alluding to the struggle in its use of language rather than describing specifics. Unfailingly rhythmic, the recitation style is occasionally reminiscent of Linton Kwesi Johnson while being clearly South African. The Kalahari Surfers produce bubbling, driving backing, frequently propelled by the bass. Sometimes their playing shows the influence of dub effects. At all times the music is perfectly suited to the poetry. A very happy marriage of words and music. *(Knitting Factory Works, 74 Leonard Street, New York, NY 10013, USA.*
ReR Recommended, 79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8JG, England)
John Eyles

Lisle Ellis
Elevations
Victo CD027 CD

Kaiser/Kimura/O'Rourke/Oswald
Acoustics
Victo CD025 CD

Two engaging but very different releases from Victo, the Quebec-based label, connected with the Victoriaville Festival. **Elevations** brings together musicians from Canada and USA in compositions by bassist Lisle Ellis, who works in San Francisco. A fairly controlled grouping: 4 saxes (Christopher Cauley, Glenn Spearman, Larry Ochs and Joe McPhee, who also plays trombone) plus Donald Robinson (percussion) and James Ruthier (electric guitar, on three tracks). The spirit of Albert Ayler is present throughout, reflected above all in the fantastic energy and dialogue of the wind improvisations, held tightly together by Ellis' strong, ever-alert bass line. It's very well recorded, with a sharp edge to all the individual contributions. And there's plenty of humour, too. The discipline of the whole production spills over into some excellent short free improvisations (tracks 4 and 6) — edgy, but always well-focused. An enjoyable disc.

Acoustics is music it's extremely difficult to write about directly. Both Henry Kaiser and Jim O'Rourke play acoustic guitar, Mari Kimura is a violinist from New York and John Oswald (of plunderphonics fame) appears in the slightly less familiar role of saxophone player. The recording is vivid — it needs to be when the crucial detail is at the level of small whispers. Whether in the quartets (the bulk of the album) or the duos with Kimura and the two trios, the playing is devastatingly 'accurate'; listen, for example, to the two-guitar interplay at the end of track 4 or the uncanny, almost disembodied way in which O'Rourke's guitar seems to shadow Kimura on track 7. The interplay works both in slower and in some astonishing fast material. A fine CD whose main quality that I could put into words is openness to silence, to stillness, even in the midst of frenetic activity. But writing about it is fairly pointless — you have to listen... *(Victo UK distributor is These — Tel: 0171 622 8834)*
Nick Couldry

Soixante Etages
Revolutionary Suicide
33REVPERMI 9404 CD

Etage 34
Exorde
33REVPERMI 9505 CD

Soixante Etages is 10 years old but this is my first brush with the French six-piece, here augmented by guests Michel Henritzi (guitar) and ace improv alto saxist Daunik Lazro. Although the nine tracks are credited to individuals, there's a strong emphasis on spontaneity — the amplified firepower of rock and the textural free-for-all of free improv. Tapes, electronics, percussion, electric bass and two guitarists, one of whom, the wildly inventive Dominique Répécaud, also uses prepared guitars. They work incredibly well off sturdy back beats

on tracks like the opening 'Gunfights' and the deftly-titled 'What's The Fuck Being In Hell (With You)!'. The mix is dense, the mesh of guitar distortion and tape-noise overlay, raw. But it's not all menace: 'Not A Losing Battle' is a ruggedly melodic instrumental and 'A Little About Mr Plum' and 'Revolutionary Suicide' are essentially rock songs with improvised texture-making at the edges.

Etage 34, as the name implies, is a splinter group of Soixante Etages and no less ferocious when it comes to density and amplification. Its trio of members, Daniel Koskowitz (drums), Olivier Paquotte (bass guitar) and Dominique Répécaud (electric guitars), are also all members of Soixante Etages. Once again the terrain is free rock — the bludgeoning rhythms of the latter, the off-kilter sonic experimentation of the former. Répécaud, especially, takes the most liberties in leaping from the pulse-based energy with lacerating, textural slashes of guitar frenzy. Paquotte lays down some formidable fuzzed-up bass riffs and supplies the 'melodic' dimension to the 11 tracks, while Koskowitz's surround-sound percussive drive holds everything together. There's gritty excitement aplenty here; above all a remarkable control and sense of direction at high volumes that make both **Revolutionary Suicide** and **Exorde** powerful listening experiences. *(33REVPERMI, BP 3042, F54012 Nancy Cedex, France)*

Chris Blackford

Evan Parker
50th Birthday Concert
Leo Double CD LR 212/213 CD

Evan Parker in clover, in action first with Alex von Schlippenbach and Paul Lovens and then with Barry Guy and Paul Lytton. With Parker's music the weightiness of such an occasion doesn't make any difference to the flood of intensities that is his music. There's no "and this is a particular favourite I wrote when I was just starting out" of course; instead of celebrating moments from the past this is a celebration of the moment itself, a flow of Evanescent happenings where memory plays its part but the present is constantly turning what came before on its head.

Among percussive pianists Schlippenbach's a relatively melodic player and the fascination of the first disc is following the ways in which he plays underneath and against Parker. When Parker lays out time stretches and Schlippenbach adopts larger frames for the music. When they play together speed becomes a guiding principle, not in terms of playing fast, but in terms of immediacy of communication. Lovens provides subtle and apposite commentary.

Marvellous, but then the rate at which ideas are chewed up and spat out by the Parker/Guy/Lytton trio is something else again. Anyone who's seen the trio over the 15 or so years of its existence will know that there's nothing to touch it. Pointless perhaps to talk about progress with such music, but there is a sense in which the band have refined what it is they do. So this set is similar in terms of texture but slightly denser and more animated than something like 86's **Atlanta**. There's no parallel I can think of anywhere to the rapport these three share. Parker's firing on all 12 cylinders at 50 — let's hope it continues for a long time to come.

Will Montgomery

Charles Gayle/Sunny Murray/William Parker
Kingdom Come
Knitting Factory Works KFW157 CD

Initial excitement with Gayle after exposure to an FMP recording with Parker and Rashied Ali was tempered by witnessing a colourless set with Hilliard Green (bass) and Michael Wimberley (reputedly he's a sax player; his drumming was hardly a revelation) at London's Disobey Club last year. Writing in *Resonance*, Michael Ritchie enthused about the resulting disc (**Live At Disobey**,

Blast First, BFFP100 CD), but to these ears its scope was limited. Ritchie liked the "structure": maybe as part of a smorgasbord that includes Glassy minimalism, Techno and plunderphonics it's passable, but to anyone addicted to the special high of free jazz it sounded thin, a sound-alike ghost of free jazz rather than an interactive process that "lists everything under the sun" (Blood Ulmer).

In this company, though, he can hardly go wrong. His tenor reveals a fine, rough-hewn edge and a tender, soulful core. Sunny Murray (one of the inventors of metre-free drumming) and William Parker (kingpin of happening NYC jazz) provide fabulous support; Gayle's likeable rhapsodies are pressed into state-of-the-art jewel-cases. While the blowing never hits the peak the genre demands, it's consistently engaged — even Gayle's amateurish, sub-Cecil piano provides welcome textural contrast to his zigzagging saxophone.
Ben Watson

Various Artists
Step To Another World Music
RecRec ReCDec 50 CD

This is not a 'collectors' special' full of previously unreleased material, but a thorough overview of some 15 years' existing releases from the always adventurous RecRec label of Zurich, and available at about £4 in the UK. This compilation is not all wacky avant-rock bands, that's for sure, though a liking for accordions is probably advisable. You may find all sorts of fun and games that you'd somehow overlooked: I certainly did, having previously been unaware of the playful instrumental work of Die Knodel or Il Gran Teatro Amaro, for example. There are plenty of names that are perhaps more familiar, among them Camberwell Now, The Ex/Tom Cora, Tenko, and Jauniaux/Mori, and above all there's plenty of Fred Frith, in a variety of settings — you do have to appreciate his ah, distinctive singing. Personally, I couldn't abide The Jellyfish Kiss piece, and thought the Debile Menthol one never got going, but diff'rent strokes and all that... There's even a little Schumann by pianist Werner Bärtschi. Good accompanying notes and striking packaging, as well... Be warned, the first piece, a 15-second assault by Bob Ostertag, is likely to have the unwary checking their CD machines for some disastrous malfunctions. *(Rec Rec Genossenschaft, P.O. Box 717, 8026 Zurich, Switzerland)*
Gerard F Tierney

Joan La Barbara/Kenneth Goldsmith
73 Poems
Lovely Music LCD 3002 CD

Renowned American experimental vocalist Joan La Barbara's latest recording is an interpretation of poet Kenneth Goldsmith's collection **73 Poems**. La Barbara's compositions actually run to 79 sub-two minute vocal arrangements of the texts (the shortest piece is just three seconds). The dexterous, three-dimensional sonic architecture is established by an array of multilayered vocal moods which keep the overall shape of the work full of surprises and interesting contrasts. The presentation is conversational and song-like, including fragments of everyday speech, references to American culture and rock music; from intimate reverie she'll sometimes expand into mysterious soundscapes alive with disturbing resonances that employ a range of extended vocal techniques. That this album consists entirely of vocal sounds makes it all the more remarkable, reminding us that the human voice is a complete instrument in its own right, and capable, when the vocalist is as outstanding as Joan La Barbara, of an unequalled emotional sensitivity and subtlety. *(Lovely Music, 260 West Broadway, New York, New York 10013, USA)*
Chris Blackford

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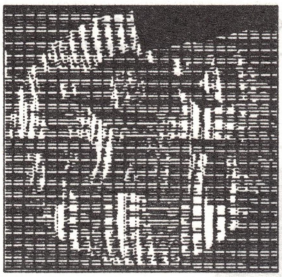


Barry Guy & London Jazz Composers' Orchestra

Portraits

Evan Parker, Trevor Watts, Paul Rutherford, Alan Tomlinson, Simon Picard, Phil Wachsmann, Barre Phillips, Marc Charig, Paul Dunmal, Howard Riley, & others

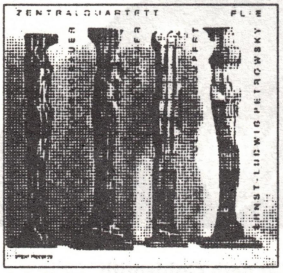
Intakt Double CD 035 (2 CD)

Barry Guy & London Jazz Composers' Orchestra

Zurich Concerts

Anthony Braxton, Tony Oxley, Dave Holland, Evan Parker, Trevor Watts, Paul Rutherford, Alan Tomlinson, Simon Picard, Phil Wachsmann, Barre Phillips, & others

Intakt Double CD 005 (2 CD, Reissue)



Zentralquartett

Plié

Conrad Bauer: Trombone
Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky: Saxophone
Ulrich Gumpert: Piano
Günter Sommer. Drums

Intakt CD 037

Jon Rose

Violin Music In The Age Of Shopping

Jon Rose: Violin
Shelley Hirsch: Voice
Otomo Yoshihide: Tapes
Chris Cutler: Drums
Irène Schweizer: Guest Shopper on Piano

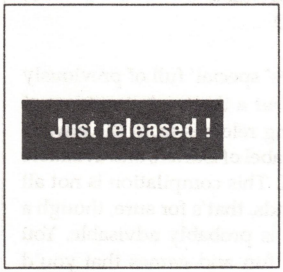
Intakt CD 038

Les Diaboliques

Les Diaboliques

Irène Schweizer: Piano
Maggie Nicols: Voice
Joëlle Léandre: Bass

Intakt CD 033



Wittwer-Schütz-Lovens

Choice-Chase

Stephan Wittwer, Guitar
Martin Schütz: El. 5-String Cello
Paul Lovens: Drums

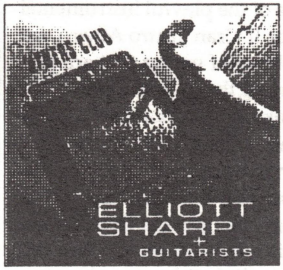
Intakt CD 032

Slawterhaus

Monumental

Johannes Bauer: Trombone,
Dietmar Diesner: Saxophone
Peter Hollinger: Drums
Jon Rose: Violine, Electronics

Intakt CD 030



Elliott Sharp

'Dyners Club

Elliott Sharp: Guitar
Roger Kleier: Guitar
David Mecionis: Guitar
John Myers: Guitar

Intakt CD 036

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Roses and Rocketships

Chris Blackford reviews three new releases by *Bill Nelson* which reflect the diversity of his still undervalued work.

Opinion is still hugely divided over the merits of Be Bop Deluxe, who were founded by Yorkshire-born vocalist and guitarist Bill Nelson in 1972. "[A] pastiche of David Bowie's futuristic rock, guitar-led heavy metal... [which]...ended up sounding like 10CC's vapid pop," says one rock encyclopedia. Another tome contends that Be Bop "turned out some of the finest progressive rock albums of the 70s," and that if they hadn't split in August 1978 the group "might have established itself as one of rock's all-time great groups."

Radioland — BBC Radio One Live In Concert *(Windsong WINCD 065 CD)*, live recordings from 1976-78, features many of the group's creative highpoints (yes, I share some of the second writer's enthusiasm) among the 16 tracks (77 minutes), and reminds us how astonishingly eclectic Be Bop Deluxe were: arguably as astonishingly and effectively eclectic as the first few Roxy Music albums and early Talking Heads; unlike those people, however, Be Bop were never garlanded with a 'sophisticated art rock' kudos. They deserve better! 'Blazing Apostles' seamlessly interrelates R&B, jazz rock and prog rock synthplay (Andrew Clark); 'Sister Seagull' and the 'Modern Music' medley reveal an ear for a memorable pop ballad; while 'Superenigmatix','Possession' and 'Fair Exchange' splice the melodic speed of new wave with hard rock riffing. Nelson's primary strength with Be Bop Deluxe was in making beautifully structured links between genres, with a polished ease that was always accessible, never slick, and always more than the sum of its parts.

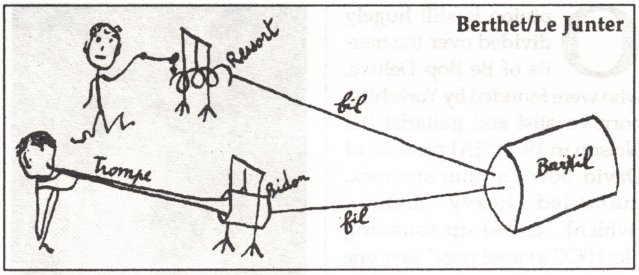
While most 70s progressive rock musicians were left high and dry, Bill Nelson comfortably embraced the new wave scene via the shorter-lived Red Noise. Afterwards, he set up Cocteau Records and began to establish a non-mainstream solo career for his more abstract instrumental compositions, sometimes comparable in mood(s) to Brian Eno's ambient music, though Nelson's predictably received less critical attention.

His latest work in this vein is **Crimsworth — Flowers, Stones, Fountains And Flames** *(Resurgence RES 104 CD)*, the result of a collaboration with visual artist Rob Ward in 1993-94, whose inspiration for the gallery installation came from a stretch of natural landscape near his home called Crimsworth. Even without Ward's paintings in the gallery context, Nelson's two lengthy compositions are substantial enough to hold the attention for over an hour. Expansive, airy electronic drones are punctuated by spartan piano and percussive tones, as well as sampled natural sounds such as running water and distant woodland noises. He introduces tension in undulating chordal waves, building layers of translucent microtonal sounds with great delicacy. If you've enjoyed Eno's **On Land** or Sylvian/Czukay's **Plight & Premonition** you're sure to find **Crimsworth** an equally satisfying experience.

Practically Wired, Or How I Became... Guitarboy! *(All Saints ASCD22 CD)* is another direction entirely: an album of multitrack, guitar-based instrumentals which even draw on Nelson's teenage guitar heroes Duane Eddy, The Shadows and The Ventures. All of the music is improvised and the range of guitar styles (both popular and experimental) create what he calls an "instant guitar sketchbook", though once again Nelson's considerable structuring abilities make this agreeably accessible music entertaining, and not some kind of glutinous pastiche. 'Her Presence In Flowers' is especially enchanting. **R**

ShortCuts

Reviewed by
Chris Blackford



Pierre Berthet/Frédéric Le Junter *Berthet — Le Junter* (Vand'Oeuvre VD09407 CD) A French duo who design and build their own instruments, Berthet and Le Junter sometimes sound like a couple of enlightened buskers in a scrapyard. Their songs (by Le Junter) are deliberately unpolished, gruff chants underpinned by rudimentary percussive rhythms, woodwind and string drones — all of which are surprisingly catchy after a few hearings. 'Troc 'n' Broc' sets up a relentless punkish riff on homemade electric guitar along with appropriately strangulated vocals. That's Part One; Part Two is two lengthy sound installations (by Berthet), the first pulsating with the kind of unusual percussive energy generated by British groups like Bow Gamelan and Echo City who also specialise in the use of invented instruments; the second, 'Trompe et ressort', is almost ambient, murmuring with expansive wind drones, wrapped in dark hues. And judging by the photographs and sketches the instruments are as intriguing as the music itself. *(Vand'Oeuvre, c/o CCAM, BP 126, F-54500 Vandoeuvre Les Nancy, France)*

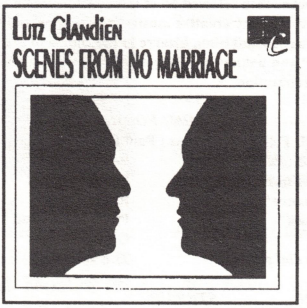
Paul Downing *Flight Through Cloudless Sky* (Paulos Records PD PR01 CD) 14 short, solo cello pieces by Paul Downing. All but one were recorded in two churches, and their contemplative atmosphere appears to have influenced the mood of the performances which are agreeably understated. There's a refined 'classical' feel to several pieces, whereas the title-track and 'Cloudscape #2', the most dramatic with its abrupt *arco* sweeps, seek out grainier textures. The rather haunting theme of 'Suzanne' is my favourite. The CD runs for just over 25 minutes, but it adds up to a quietly uplifting experience. *(contact: Paulos Records, 48 Woolhampton Way, Chigwell Row, Essex, 1G7 4QJ, England)*

Somewhere In Europe *The Iron Trees Are In Full Bloom* (These Silences TSCD1 CD) With a dozen or so track titles sounding as sepulchral as anything contrived by the late Joy Division, Somewhere In Europe (Andrea James and David Tiffen) employ guitars, synths, "found sounds" and vocals to create a mostly interesting hybrid of Gothic indie rock, concrète soundscapes and minimalist electronics. The compositional elements are relatively straightforward and usually easily identifiable, but of course the skill is in knowing how much repetition and gradual development deliberately limited constituents can bear. 'Festival Of The Oppressed' uses an effectively traumatic synth repetition against snatches of backwards voice-over, and 'Pursuit Of The Elusive' creates a swirling soundscape teeming with manipulated gull and human cries, juxtaposed by drum machine. However, when SIE overreach in search of the dramatic (eg, 'Shadow And Flesh'), portentous turns pretentious and the music quickly descends into the quagmire of Gothic cliché. Happily, the duo gets it about right most of the time. *(Contact: World Serpent Distribution, Unit 717, Seager Buildings, Brookmill Road, London SE8 4HL, England)*

Joseph Celli *Organic Oboe* (O.O. Discs 1 CD) Reissue of this collection of compositions performed by experimental woodwind virtuoso Joseph Celli. 'Sky: S For J' (1976) composed by Celli features five English horns played without their double reeds. A strangely enchanting, sometimes unsettling gauze of animal-like whimpering and hooting. Celli gave the American premiere of 'Spiral' (1968) by Stockhausen in 1973 where the performer responds to

shortwave radio events with an electronically treated English horn, plus oboe, kazoo and voice. Elliott Schwartz's 'Extended Oboe' (1973-74) uses more conventional oboe sounds in opposition to an electronic tape. The piece constantly fluctuates in tempo and register, and while the oboe playing still sounds fresh and penetrating, the electronic parts have not aged well. Finally, 'A Summoning Of Focus' (1977), for me the highpoint of the collection, composed by Malcolm Goldstein for Celli, is a piece for oboe asking the performer to improvise in circular-breathing mode for 11 minutes, while always transforming some aspect of the sound produced. Celli's *tour de force* performance (one of the earliest I've heard using this breathing technique for this duration) grows in intensity and complexity as he shapes the buzzing, squealing multiphonic layers. *(O.O. Discs, 261 Groovers Avenue, Black Rock, CT 06605-3452, USA)*

Lutz Glandien *Scenes From No Marriage* (ReR ReRC LG1 CD) This is the first release in ReR's new Contemporary Classical series (ReRC), and if the quality of future CDs matches this one then we are certainly in for a treat. These five electroacoustic pieces by the East German composer Lutz Glandien reveal his superb integration of acoustic instruments with taped electronic music. 'Die Abgestürzt Sind: For Percussion And Tape' (1993) involves glassy glockenspiel clusters and ripples, disturbed by sudden electronic swells. The delicacy of some of the percussion passages is reminiscent of the Prologue and Epilogue sections of Gavin Bryars' **Three Viennese Dancers**. 'Weiter So: For String Quintet And Tape' (1989) opens impressively with ferocious, staccato electronic rhythms which the strings match with a percussive intensity. Again the dialogue between pre-recorded and played constituents is achieved with great sensitivity. The two other compositions on the disc are 'For Piano And Tape' (1992) and 'For Drums And Tape' (1991); here the drums are played by Chris Cutler who brings a welcome



rock-rhythmic sensibility to the piece. If, like me, you find much electroacoustic music technically fascinating but not emotionally engaging, you'll be pleased to discover that Lutz Glandien's exciting work offers the best of both worlds. (new address: *ReR, 79 Beulah Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR7 8JG, England)*

Hugh Hopper Band *Carousel* (Cuneiform Rune 67 CD) Fusion has got itself a bad name — for slick virtuosity, for contrived and superficial blends of jazz and popular genres. Nevertheless, Hugh Hopper's Anglo-Dutch quintet is doing it with dignity — well arranged jazz-rock without the self-indulgent, fiddly frills. Hopper's fuzzed bass still loiters with intent; the title-track is the most texturally ambitious, two others are free-fusion. It's Cool, elegant, boppish, studded with memorable tunes like 'Lock, Stock And Barrel', and it'll grow on you.

Organum *Veil Of Tears* (Matchless Recordings MRCD 24 CD) Listening to this CD I was reminded of David Jackman's general interest (*Unsound Magazine* (USA) 1989) in creating "something really ancient, like something from the very beginnings of music making." This is especially apparent on the captivating 'Veil Of Tears' Parts 1 & 2, where elemental 'musical' sounds of definite pitch (wind and electronic drones, chimes, shouts) merge with and subtly shape, thus giving musical context to, environmental (rain?) and human-generated noises (metallic objects, buckets (?) and the like thrown about) which have a greater textural, than precise pitch value. The beauty of this piece lies in its inextricable tangle of controllable and uncontrollable sounds — not being able to see the soundsmiths (Jackman, Dinah Jane Rowe and Michael Prime) at work makes it all the more fascinating.

Equally beautiful in its scratchy, ruminative unfolding is 'Delta' (with Roger Sutherland), recorded at Recommended Records' tiny shop (now These Records) in busy Wandsworth Road, London,

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though you'd never guess this from its expansive, spectral soundscaping. Jim O'Rourke and Robert Hampson also contribute in a remix capacity. This is stunningly crafted, atmospheric improv. Spellbinding.

46,000 Fibres *Emanates* (MTB 018 CD) **Emanates** uses improvisation as a means to making connections between rock, techno, avant-garde electronics, ambient and noise genres. What sounds like a recipe for a potentially unwieldy, eclectic mix, turns out to be handled expertly by this London-based five-piece: RW Clark, Eddie Green, Leon Maurice-Jones, Nick Rowan and Tonal D. Some phases are driven by a strict techno-like pulse, but that is constantly undercut, brutalised or partially masked by a plethora of unpredictable guitar abrasives, electronic meshes and wandering radio signals. The fourth piece unleashes a powerful, racing rhythm track reminiscent of Pink Floyd's old VCS3 in 'On The Run'. They draw incandescent soundscapes with much aplomb, too.

This is an exciting direction for improv to be taking, and demonstrates that in the right hands feverish eclecticism can produce striking results. *(MTB, 76 Sulivan Court, Fulham, London SW6 3DB)*

Mike Osborne *Shapes* (Future Music Records FMR CD10-021995 CD) If ever a reminder was needed of how strong and independent (from US free jazz) the early 70s, British free jazz scene was, here it is! Hard to believe that this previously unreleased session from 1972, featuring some of the key improvisors of the time, has been 'lost' for so long. The powerhouse frontline attack of altoist Mike Osborne, John Surman (soprano and baritone) and Alan Skidmore (tenor), who would form the acclaimed SOS trio the following year, are on blistering form, robustly supported by two bassists, Harry Miller and Earl Freeman, and drummer Louis Moholo.

'Shapes', at just under 20 minutes, consists of superbly controlled, fiery freeplay between the saxes, smoothly reuniting for the uplifting thematic unisons. 'Double It' sees Moholo's ubiquitous, crisp cross-rhythms buoy up some sturdy soloing by the saxists. The weaving and unravelling of the harmonic tapestry still sounds fresh and persuasive. *(Future Music Records, 10 Baddow Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 ODG, England)*

Jin Hi Kim *Komungo 'Round The World* (Korean Music Source KMS 001 MC) With so much opportunistic ethnic pick 'n' mix about these days, it's a pleasure to hear a recording where intercultural exchanges amount to more than mere fashionable condiment. Jin Hi Kim has been at the forefront of Korean musicians who have brought a traditional Korean sensibility to Western improvised music and made the two into something else. Here she is joined in duet improvisations by Adam Plack (didgeridoo), Rahul Sariputura (sitar), Hideaki Kuribayashi (bass koto) and Mor Thiam (Sengalese djembe and dogodrum hand drums).

Each piece reveals a different dimension of the komungo: a lithe percussive quality against the didgeridoo's deep swirling patterns; subtle, vibrato inflections created by note-bending which accelerate in tempo with the sitar. The duet with bass koto is the most mysterious and abstract, using space to sustain tension and uncertainty. Finally, the crisp accents of the Sengalese hand drums develop a strong rhythmic dialogue with the komungo's supple tone quality. Repeated hearings reveal the beauty and inventiveness of these duets. *(Korean Music Source, 261 Groovers Avenue, Black Rock, CT 06605-3452, USA)*

Edward Vesala/Sound & Fury *Nordic Gallery* (ECM 1541 CD) Few jazz composers and arrangers have, in recent years, received the same kind of generous plaudits as those heaped upon the work of Finnish percussionist/composer

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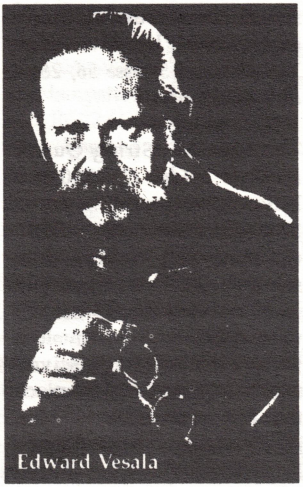
Edward Vesala and his ensemble Sound & Fury. There again, indispensable albums like **Ode To The Death Of Jazz** (ECM, 1990) and **Invisible Storm** (ECM, 1992) set new standards of excellence in eclectic jazz ensemble writing and performance. In terms of its writing and execution **Nordic Gallery** matches its predecessors, but in terms of extending the existing soundworld it offers few surprises. When one hears such a talented and brilliantly cohesive ensemble like this, one starts to hope for something different on each new album.

Even so, the close harmonic layering of saxes, flutes and Matti Riikonen's elegiac muted trumpet is as lustrous as ever, and particularly elegant on 'The Quay Of Meditative Future'. Accordion, harp, koto, tamboura and angklung bring carefully deployed folk elements to the jazz, while Jimi Sumen's angry electric guitar roughens the textures with a rock influence. Finns being ineluctably drawn to a tango or two, expect some Latin dance material to creep in and lighten the mood — 'Bluego' is rather gorgeous. Yes, **Nordic Gallery** is indispensable, too.

Hal Rammel *Elsewheres* (Penumbra CD001 CD) A collection of fascinating compositions and improvisations from American instrument inventor/builder Hal Rammel. *Elsewheres* features his electroacoustic "sound palette" — a painter's palette mounted with wooden rods, (amplified by a contact microphone) which can be bowed,


Edward Vesala

plucked or disturbed by other objects (such as a wine glass). The sounds are fed through digital processing and delay units to give multitrack, microtonal soundscapes. Rammel eschews obvious linear development in favour of a more environmental approach where sounds appear to come and go with a leisurely randomness — rattling, rippling, chattering, crackling, rising and subsiding. 'Secret Tangent' recalls the strange wheezing of a daxophone. Rammel's immense but understated skill at sound manipulation sustains the interest throughout. *(Penumbra Music, P.O. Box 282, Grafton, WI 53024, USA)*

The Tony Oxley Quartet *The Tony Oxley Quartet* (Incus CD15 CD) Perhaps it's the collision of styles: the finely-tuned non-idiomatic understanding between Oxley and Derek Bailey — their deft empathy in creating space or fragile textures — that seems at odds with the electronics and tape switchboard cut-up world of Pat Thomas (more of his piano playing, please!) and Matt Wand. The opening 'Quartet 1' has its moments, but unfortunately the thrown-in TV and film fragments sound clumsy and clichéd (too much unfocused, hyperactive noodling, not enough interesting textural surfaces/environments here). The gritty, angular 'Duo TD' by Oxley and Bailey is undoubtedly the summit, interspersed with passages of icy calm, and marred only by a *fade-out* 'conclusion'. *(Incus Records, 14 Downs Road, London E5 8DS)*

Jean-Paul G Noguès *Attention* (Viva Voce VV 4007 CD) The sopranino saxophone still awaits a full-time, specialist exponent to establish the instrument's reputation in improvised music. Perhaps Frenchman Jean-Paul G Noguès is the player to do just that. **Attention** showcases his exploration of the instrument's striking sonic capabilities. One 41'48" improvisation is a daunting prospect for the listener, but Noguès' virtuosic playing makes the effort worthwhile. Less nasal than the soprano, the sopranino has a thrilling, piercing tone which Noguès commands to great effect. The melodic phrasing has a folk inflexion; the split tones buzz and drone like a bagpipe; Noguès keeps the listener alert with sudden pauses or rapid scalar movements across the upper register. Like the sopranino, Noguès deserves your attention. *(Viva Voce, "La Corderie", F-33880 Cambes, France)*

Dislocation *Carve Another Notch* (Scatter 01 CD); **Derek Bailey** *Drop Me Off At 96th* (Scatter 02 CD) Welcome aboard Scatter, a new improv label based in Glasgow. First up is Dislocation, a Japanese four-piece firmly rooted in that country's burgeoning noise/improv scene. Two pieces; the second a mighty 58'30". Exciting sax, electric strings and electronics abstraction, thankfully without very much of the Japanese taste for pastiche and mixed-genre sampling. Their carefully constructed, tense atmospheres are not unlike British group Conspiracy's. **Drop Me Off...** is two sessions from 1986-87 of solo Derek Bailey — as charming, eccentric and idiosyncratically 'lyrical' as **Solo Guitar Volume 2** (Incus). Essential for Bailey buffs; newcomers will marvel at the maturity of this unique guitar vocabulary. *(Scatter, (1/2) 79 West End Park Street, Glasgow G3 6LJ, Scotland)*

CHW-Trio *Serendipity* (Hybrid HMP CD7 CD) German trio at the centre of a busy improv scene in Bremen. Trombonist Paul Hubweber shows occasional similarities with Alan Tomlinson's clipped, sometimes humorous phraseology; Hannes Clauss' drums are non-rhythmically energetic; guitarist Hainer Wörmann supplies the angular, pointillistic slashes of colour to their mostly non-soloistic creations. They're not derivative, but well within a European improv school that favours collective texture-making above idiomatic gestures. Solidly workmanlike, if currently lacking that extra sparkle to make the top drawer of this school. *(Hainer Wörmann, Timmersloher Strasse 56, 28215 Bremen, Germany)*

The Invisible String Quartet *Entomic* (Slam CD 210 CD) Briton Dave Draper is behind this mysterious epithet. Debut CD solo improvisations using self-built guitars in tandem with samplers and electronics. Always master of the technology, Draper creates impressively structured, multilayered pieces that integrate industrial, rock, jazz, abstract electronics, Frippertronics styles. Never merely a miscellany, though. Dave Draper is a distinctive guitar explorer who merits wider recognition.

Jérôme Bourdellon *Trajet Solo* (Khôkhôt K192 CD) Multitrack, polyphonic compositions as well as single instrument improvisations. The 10 pieces display a high level of imaginative playing, exploring a host of ethereal and ghostly sonorities on various flutes and piccolo. Meditative, elusive and dissonant. Investigate this compelling performer. *(Jérôme Bourdellon, 12 rue de la Commanderie, 54000 Nancy, France)*

Zeitgeist Plays Rzewski *A Decade* (O.O. Discs 15 CD) The result of a 10-year collaboration between US composer Frederic Rzewski and US chamber ensemble Zeitgeist. Four very approachable pieces by Rzewski: 'Wails' (1984) was inspired by an ancient Greek text and involves a primordial poignancy in the writing for sopranino amidst glockenspiel clusters and steel drums; 'Spots' (1986) is lyrical, almost pastoral and 'The Lost Melody' (1989) has a memorable, Klezmer thematic basis. Finally, 'Crusoe' intersperses brief, quirky, melodic instrumental passages with spoken and sung text based on Defoe's novel, amounting to a kind of psychodrama of the shipwrecked hero. Throughout, the ensemble's performances are delightful, conveying the wit, charm and vivacity of Rzewski's compositions. A fine collection.

Brötzmann/Kondo/Parker/Drake *Die Like A Dog* (FMP CD 64 CD); **Brötzmann/Drake Duo** *The Dried Rat-Dog* (Okka Disk OD12004 CD) Subtitled 'Fragments Of Music, Life And Death Of Albert Ayler', **Die Like A Dog** is more in the *spirit* of Ayler than merely variations on his themes, though some are woven into the fabric of these four superb improvisations. Against the impeccably sure-footed rhythm section of Hamid Drake (drums) and William Parker (double bass), Toshinori Kondo (trumpet) and Peter Brötzmann (reeds) produce a riveting frontline dialogue: fiercely intense powerplay, off-centre thematic lyricism — Albert would have loved it. **The Dried Rat-Dog** is another stunner. Drake's splendidly deft use of tablas and toms eases Brötzmann towards his most appealing, quietly edgy performances of recent times. Tracks 2 and 3 are simply marvellous. *(FMP: UK distribution by Cadillac — 0171 278 7391 Okka Disk, P.O. Box 146472 Chicago, IL 60614-9998, USA)* **R**

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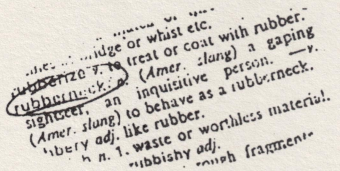

...short ideas repeated
Massage the brain...
Robert Ashley, 1979